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The American **MERCURY**

JUNE 1951 25 CENTS

**PREGNANCY AND POLITICS
IN ALABAMA**

PAUL BOWLES

WRITES FROM MOROCCO

By the Waters of the Danube

by Alexandra Orme

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In Our Readers' Opinion

A word about "Little Nooley's Blues." The cat that wrote it and the cat that put it in print are *real fine!*

ROBERT E. LENT
BALTIMORE, MARYLAND

The wonderful article on Marine Corps training I tore out and sent to a friend who was on Iwo Jima. He and his wife and son will get a kick out of that account of all that "Pop" went through in training.

DOROTHY WATERMAN
MELROSE, MASSACHUSETTS

We like the MERCURY. We loved the treatise on sob's; we should like to see one equally as erudite and yet fundamental on the subject of bahstads and plain jerks. In this sector they are as plentiful as sand fleas, and as annoying.

MRS. P. E. TETER
BAY MINETTE, ALABAMA

You seem all tittered up about having a lot of decent people not wanting your magazine lying around loose. The serious side is that there are precious bits that should be available to thoughtful readers of the Grandma-Aunt Minnie-Little Willie set. Articles of information and opinion such as "Manchurian Diary," "Foreign Intelligence," "The Tragedy of George Marshall," and others would do a bang-up job of making worth-while Americans, and illiterates like me, "think and argue." Your dear old Grandma,

MARI LEIT WOZENCRA
PARIS, ILLINOIS

As a college student, I find myself frequently verbally plagiarizing your magazine. If the MERCURY is "shocking the reader . . . with dirt" then may I only say that the most intelligent and pious of us with the best modern equipment do not clean our carpets on the floor. They have to be taken into the open and beaten.

RICHARD CROLIUS, JR.
TOPEKA, KANSAS

(Continued on back cover)

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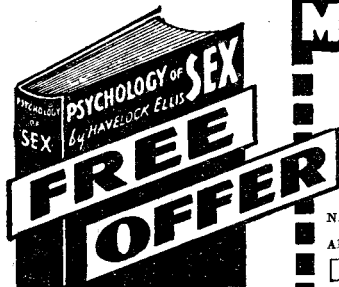
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In the Mercury's Opinion

National Nonsense

IT IS BECAUSE it is a democracy, I suppose, that the United States manages to contain such a vast quantity of nonsense in its public life without anyone getting excited about it or making any effort to eliminate it. Since there are millions of dollars and thousands of fine, dignified, well-paying offices lying about to reward people for putting words into print, broadcasting them, or hurling shovelful at public gatherings, nobody condemns those who take advantage of these opportunities and dream up all sorts of weird phrases to express what they usually

have on their minds — namely, nothing. Since there is so much unavoidable nonsense about, a strange, half-weary tolerance comes over most people. They put up with it as they put up with smoke in the air, bad food, traffic noises, or any of the myriad discomforts modern civilization foists upon one.

As a result, nonsense has become one of the great public deities of America and hardly anyone dares address himself to any kind of audience without paying it tribute. Anybody who tries to do otherwise is apt to feel all the fears and tremors of a religious innovator. What right has he got to be different? he wonders, and begins to worry about his sanity. Nobody likes him, he discovers, and he isn't doing anybody any good or getting anywhere himself. Then gradually he begins paying homage to the deity and makes everybody around him happier, if a trifle confused.

This month's editorial was written by William Poster, a regular contributor to THE MERCURY.

IT IS MY opinion that nearly every moderately intelligent person in America has a special, complex department in his brain to take care of all the nonsense it receives. This department develops early, when, in grammar school, he has to listen to, and repeat back to teacher, a bunch of axioms, evaluations, and beliefs which are flatly contradicted by everything he witnesses the minute he hits the sidewalk. He can't get sympathy or even an explanation from his folks because they haven't got the time and patience. They just tell little Johnny to behave himself and get good marks if he doesn't want his allowance cut off. He goes back, gives all the required answers, and stoically endures his baptism in imbecility.

Slowly his brain begins to divide and adjust to circumstances. He keeps one part of it reserved for grownups, parents, relatives, school-teachers, cops, etc. Honesty is the best policy, he agrees politely; home, mother, chastity, sportsmanship, fair play, the American way of life are all respectfully saluted by him with one section of his brain. Then he meets the kids down on the corner and the other sections take over. He discusses ways and means of clipping quarters from his mother's purse, kneeing his opponents in a fight, how to foul someone in a basketball game, and the chances of getting the crazy girl around the corner to take off her clothes.

Soon, the nonsense starts pouring in on him in floods and he learns that, if he wants to get along in the world, he has to accept it. A strange little mechanism something like a thermostat begins to function inside his head. At a certain point in a movie, book, newspaper, or radio program, infallible signs warn him that a nonsense period is beginning. There is a quick click, the normal receiving circuit goes out of action, and the nonsense department takes over. It keeps him patient, calm, and contained until signs tell him the ritual is over, then there is another click and he shifts into normal.

Of course, this description doesn't fit everybody. Either through occupational necessity, because every generation must have its quota of nonsense-purveyors, or through insufficient cranial capacity, in a large percentage of Americans the sense and nonsense departments slowly dissolve into each other. This process produces a respectable number of people who talk like radio commercials and newspaper editorials even to their wives and intimates. But they aren't normal Americans. They are too well unified. The normal American is a happy schizophrenic with two brains, two languages, and two ways of looking at life — one for the public and the other for his buddies.

To the normal American, 99 per cent of all political speeches fall into the nonsense category. If a poli-

tician tells a joke or indulges himself in a frenzied outburst of mudslinging, he listens with the receptive part of his brain, but it isn't long before the nonsense-thermostat clicks, enabling him to contain his boredom and assume the necessary pious countenance. He doesn't bear too much of a grudge against the politician. He knows that nonsense is a hallowed part of the act. A politician cannot offend the innumerable pressure groups that function in his constituency or among the contributors to his campaign fund. A certain amount of noble rhetoric is also customary.

A VERY STRANGE object is the reformist politician. I don't deny that some of them occasionally do good. If they didn't emerge now and then, graft and inefficiency would pile up so thickly on the machinery of government as to cause serious breakdowns. But there is something inherently comic about anybody who emerges from the intricate deals and shenanigans of major party politics standing up and righteously denouncing a bookie or a swindler.

I remember listening one morning to the late Fiorello LaGuardia fervidly excoriating "grifters, tin-horns, and gamblers." I then strolled downstairs and passed the local pool-room, where a bookmaker was raking in the morning bets while a uniformed patrolman sat next to him, helping the bookie make change

while he figured up his cut. Was the late Mayor ignorant, helpless, or crooked? Not at all. He must have learned quickly that if he wanted to stay in office and clean up some city departments, he had to wink at considerable corruption in the others.

Sooner or later, all crime and corruption investigations in this country run up against the same insurmountable obstacles. Suppose a few small-time criminals are brought in and pressure is put on them to reveal how they stay in business. They give a certain amount of information about bigger criminals; the bigger criminals can then be made to yield information about small-time politicians who in turn can be made to explain how the bigger politicians allow them to function. Pretty soon, the investigators discover that if they continue they will be swatting themselves or their best friends right in the eye. It then becomes the object of the investigation to appease the public or to throw out the politicians and criminals who have lost their utility and allow a new set to take over. It also spreads a certain euphoria abroad. The nonsense departments of the newspapers are given some fresh exercise. Thousands of editorials are written expressing the belief that Investigation XYZ has started cleaning out the Augean stables and stating that the good work should continue until the job is done.

Smoke, Noise, Ugly Vapors

THE KEFAUVER committee is, of course, somewhat unique. For one thing it has national power and it reaches the public directly through the very vivid medium of television. Now it seems to me that before embarking on such a sensational project, with the national spotlights shining full upon them, the members of the committee should have at least obtained in advance a general idea of the magnitude of the operation they entered into. It may be very noble but it is not practical to set about knocking over a skyscraper with a few axes and blowtorches. What will result is bound to be chiefly smoke, noise, ugly vapors, wasted labor, and some needless injuries.

Nobody knows just how much money was involved in the crime syndicate operations, but if you toy with some stray figures you may get an idea. A reliable newspaperman reported that in Senator Tobey's home state of New Hampshire, in one year, \$30,000,000 was bet, outside the tracks, on horses. The population of New Hampshire is about half a million. Multiply the figure quoted above by two hundred plus for the population of the rest of the country and you have a very rough estimate of the bookie handle of horse money alone. To this must be added the revenues derived from

other forms of gambling, the narcotics and protection rackets, and various other illicit enterprises. It is easy to see that crime and graft are among our bigger industries, if they are not actually the biggest.

Now I am just as anxious as the next man to see these vast pools of dirt scoured out of the national economy, but I don't think anyone but an incurable optimist can believe the job is going to be done with Congressional whiskbrooms or helped by such coy tactics as the Kefauver committee indulged in.

To begin with, it was not helpful to have Senators Tobey and Kefauver, grown-up men and politicians to boot, registering such blushing innocence and amazement every time a cop confessed to taking a fifty-dollar bribe. It strains the nonsense department of the American brain to the breaking point, particularly when it is revealed that these witnesses were previously questioned extensively in secret session. Also, there is no need for newspapers to pretend that these were new and shocking revelations. Quite a large number of people must have had some idea of what was going on — even multiple smoke-screens of nonsense can't hide operations of such size and complexity.

It is also an inescapable inference that every politician in the country, investigating or non-investigating, could have obtained some pretty good information about crime years

ago if they wanted it. If they were not actually shaking hands with racketeers, then they were certainly and knowingly shaking hands and making deals with men who shook the hands of racketeers. And they did nothing about it. And you can't exactly blame them. The whole thing had gone too far and they had to join in. How could any one watching the Kefauver show refrain from asking himself how substantial the difference was between the questioners and the questioned?

Who Is the Fall Guy?

NOW PERHAPS I am sentimental but it also gives me considerable pain to watch the small operators get it in the neck while so many of the big, staid, respectable people who profit by their operations never get questioned, but even join the parade of outraged crusaders. The other day I was reading an account of a Brooklyn trial no doubt inspired by the Kefauver example. A small-time judge, his boilers apparently ready to burst with suppressed rhetoric, let go with a furiously eloquent denunciation of a captured public enemy — a cop with a wife and two kids who had been caught accepting bribes to the staggering total of a few hundred dollars a year. With millions being juggled by the RFC, with hundreds of illegal millions disappearing in front of the

public eye and hardly a pilferer getting scratched, this unfortunate flatfoot caught a two-and-a-half to five year jail sentence and a deluge of juridical hogwash from a man who probably got appointed through the usual sacrosanct political channels. How nonsensical can you get?

A few more questions. If O'Dwyer and Moran got black eyes and even Tom Dewey a slight smudge, how can we in all sense and conscience stop there? During the last decade has there been a single state or big town where a horse-player couldn't find someone to take his deuce or where a heroin addict couldn't get his daily shot? And where some public officials were not paid off for allowing these activities to go on? Then why not call every governor and important mayor up before the committee rather than taking it out on a few carefully selected goats? And while you are at it, why not call up a few of the business men who helped launch the hoods when they needed them to break strikes or knock off the competition?

I happen to believe that corruption, at least in the epic proportions that we have known it, can, should, and ultimately will be eliminated from the scene, but the current approaches to the problem contain too many traces of our national schizophrenia to make me have much faith in them. If we are going to eliminate crime and graft, we have to look at them historically and realistically

and recognize that they have positive as well as negative social functions, else they would have ceased to exist long ago. American political life has simply grown in size and complexity beyond anything our constitutions and most of our laws take into account. The parties are composed of thousands of people, from small ward-healers to the big candidates, all of whom work hard at difficult and unpalatable tasks. We may not like the ways in which they have been rewarded, but it's no use trying to destroy these ways without finding substitutes.

Gambling and crime, too, function as outlets for the pent-up, restless, frustrated energies of the lower classes. If you want them eliminated, substitutes are likewise necessary. Then, there is the matter of police departments. It seems that any mayor of New York (and probably any other big town) who during the last thirty years seriously wanted to cut down corruption, soon found out that a rigorous application of his principles would leave him without a police force. Police are led into dishonesty not only by almost irresistible temptations, but also because excessive honesty and scrupulous law-enforcement would get them in trouble with their superiors. The entire police system of the coun-

try has to be studied with an eye to changing its controls and also perhaps the pay of the lower grade men and the opportunities open to them. And no matter how bitter a pill it is, it must be realized that any investigation into the grand orgy of illegality in the last twenty years has to be more in the spirit of a research project than a punitive expedition. The jails aren't big enough to hold all the criminals.

The Answer

AND, FINALLY, it seems to me the last expression of the national nonsense cult to leave the investigation of crime and corruption in the hands of even our best and least besmirched politicians. They are obviously too close to what they are investigating and are apt to have friends and acquaintances who are even closer. If the Senate really wants something done, let them appoint a dozen or so sophisticated, intelligent individuals, who have lived as far from politics as possible, to spend a couple of years studying the problem without hullabaloo, headlines, or TV cameras. Then, perhaps, without trying vainly to catch up with all the mistakes of the past, we might do something to prevent their repetition in the future.

THE EDITORS INTRODUCE . . .

READERS of the MERCURY have undoubtedly noticed that our Foreign Intelligence Department is handled mostly by writers of fiction, instead of by journalists, or political specialists, or professional travelers. We have purposely sought out fiction writers for this department because we feel that they are usually better equipped to communicate the mood and feeling and psychology of the place they live in, and that this will have more meaning for the reader than the usual summary of events that have already been covered quite adequately by the papers and the news magazines.

PAUL BOWLES, who writes us from Morocco this month, is a novelist and short story writer, and besides this a composer and a music critic. Bowles has been a nomad since he was about sixteen, when, after a few restless months at the University of Virginia, he beat it to Paris, where he worked for the *New York Herald*, and began to write for *transition* and a number of other avant-garde magazines. During this period he

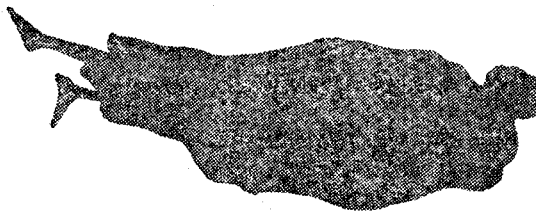
saw most of Europe, sometimes on foot and on an empty stomach; his more recent wanderings have taken him to India, the West Indies, Mexico, and most of Latin America. He first went to North Africa on the advice of his friend Gertrude Stein. Now he lives in Morocco half the year, in a remodeled native house in the Arab quarter of Tangier.

Bowles turned to music while he was still in his teens, and for the next fifteen years or so concentrated on composing. He has done incidental music for a good many Broadway plays, including William Saroyan's "My Heart's in the Highlands," Lillian Hellman's "Watch on the Rhine," and Tennessee Williams' "The Glass Menagerie."

Bowles began to write fiction again in 1946, and his renewed writing career was launched in *Partisan Review*. His novel, *The Sheltering Sky*, published by New Directions, was a best-seller in the last year or so, and he recently brought out a collection of rather fantastic short stories, *The Delicate Prey*.

FOREIGN INTELLIGENCE

No More Djinns



PAUL BOWLES

Tangier

RAIN, WHICH ordinarily gladdens the hearts of everyone but the tourists, has recently fallen in such quantities all over this part of the continent that even the natives wonder if it will ever dry off again. Lower roads have been blocked again and again by inundations. The muddy streams have swept down from the mountains with violence, destroying the villages along their banks. The professional prayer-makers have had to brush up a bit on their incantations, since people are now paying them to perform the unusual service of praying for the rain to stop.

As for the mental climate here, the absurd story which follows is a

faithful reporting of a conversation I had here a while ago with two native policemen. It was night and they were off duty, strolling on the beach. These were enlightened young men, very slick and glib, taking all of Western civilization, from penicillin to television, in their stride. Soon they were squatting in the sand telling humorous stories, as these people are likely to do, about their own less enlightened countrymen. Finally one of them said: "I'll tell you a very funny story about us, when we first went on to the force. We went on together. That was two years ago, when we didn't know anything. We had to patrol the beach every night. We didn't like that much. You know, all alone, the two of us, on the beach at night,

way out beyond the Balneario."

I didn't know, inasmuch as I had often walked by myself much further than that; the idea of danger had never occurred to me.

"And sure enough," he continued, "one night we see a light moving on the beach. We sneak up quietly and yell: 'Stop!' And all of a sudden a big white figure began moving up and down in the air and going: 'Ayayayay!' So what would you think if you didn't know any better? You'd think it was a *djinn*, and you'd get out fast. But then every night when we got near that part of the beach, we'd see this *djinn* jumping up and down and making an awful noise. So finally we thought we'd better tell the captain about it; he's a tough old man, and very smart, too. But when we told him about it he got very angry. 'So you saw a *djinn*, did you? Hah!' he said. 'Anybody but two nitwits like you would know there hasn't been a *djinn* around Tangier for at least ten years.'"

At this point I laughed, thinking that was the point and the end of the story. But they both remained completely serious.

He continued. "I said to the old man: 'Excuse me, my captain. I didn't know.' So the captain was still angry. He said: 'You're going back out to the beach tomorrow night and catch the *djinn*, you understand?' We were really scared then. But anyway, the next night when

we went back we saw the light, and we sneaked up and yelled: 'Stop!' and the spirit began to go up in the air and moan the same as always. And then instead of running away we pulled out our guns and said: 'Come here or we'll shoot.' And then, —" he chuckled — "it began to cry, and it was nothing but a woman. A lousy woman! And she said: 'Oh, please, sirs! I have to come every night to take food to my husband who is fishing up the beach.' So we were pretty angry, and we said: 'What's the idea of trying to make fools of us?' And she said: 'I thought if I did that, nobody'd bother me. I'm all alone —' So we said —" here they both began to laugh loudly with the recollection, and I knew that the point of the story was about to be reached. "We said: 'You'll see whether anybody'll bother you or not, you slut!' And we knocked her down and had a fine time with her. Afterward we ate the food she had with her and sent her back home yelling her head off. So then we had to think up something to tell the captain."

"What did you tell him?" I asked.

They were still laughing. "Oh, we said we shot at the *djinn* and it just disappeared in the air by magic, like an airplane."

"Did he believe you?"

"Of course he believed us," he said reproachfully. "He knows no man on his force would lie to him."

You never lie to your captain; that's one thing you can't do. He just said: 'All right. Don't come to me with any more *djinn* stories.' "

I let the matter drop. But a few minutes later I said: "Is it really true there's such a thing as a *djinn*, then?"

They laughed scornfully. "With all the electric lights and automobiles there are around Tangier? Hah! Those are women's stories to scare kids with. Listen, my friend. You have to go at least a hundred kilometers up into the mountains before you'll find a *djinn*, and even then you might not see any. This isn't like the old days. Everything's different now, since the war."

"I guess you're right," I said.

TANGIER GOES ON growing; it is the boom-town par excellence. In 1947 people seemed to feel that the peak had been reached, that real-estate prices simply couldn't go on rising. With the hundreds of apartment-houses that were going up, some of them actually in the open country without even a finished road nearby, everyone began to foresee a crash. Bankruptcies *en masse* were predicted; there would never be enough people to fill all the apartments. But not at all. Roads were built across the sand dunes, through the meadows, up and down the hills, suburbs sprang up which almost immediately became part of the city itself, a great

many bus lines were inaugurated, and today the process goes on with more impetus than ever.

Since the new war scare one has the impression that practically everyone with any money wants to leave whatever European country he is in and settle here in the International Zone. The great thing of course is to manage to transfer your capital here. There are no restrictions, no taxes, the climate is better than anywhere in Europe (despite this last winter's inclemency), and the belief is rampant that America somehow would prevent anyone else from occupying the Zone in the event of war. So at the moment anything is considered a good investment; you can buy part of a ruined wall on the ramparts, dig out three rooms, install a bathroom and electricity, and be pretty sure of making money on the resale. The only trouble is that everyone is in such a hurry to buy, build, and sell that there is no time to see that anything is properly done. And so, you open the door of your bedroom and it falls over on top of you; you turn on the water and the wash-basin collapses; you sit down to dinner and the chandelier overhead crashes into the middle of the table. The walls of the buildings crack open, the elevators don't move, the roofs leak, and one has the uneasy suspicion that in another decade many of the big new buildings of which Tangier is now so proud will no

longer be standing.

Everyone complains bitterly, but to no avail, of course. A new, well-constructed building is unthinkable here today. "That's Tangier," people say with a sigh, as they put pails in the middle of their living-rooms to catch the stream of rain coming through, or telephone to have a new window fitted because the other one has fallen out into the street. "It could happen only in Tangier," they tell each other, not without a certain satisfaction at the thought of living in this unique city where everything can safely be counted on to go wrong.

BUT ALL THIS is only Tangier. Once you have left behind the last sad apartment house, standing in solitary state among goats, cactus, cows, and native shacks, the countryside is just as beautiful as ever.

Morocco is the ideal country for motoring: the scenery is magnificent and varied, the roads are excellent, and there is no traffic. Gasoline prices range from seventeen cents a gallon in the Spanish Zone to about twenty-eight cents in the French, with those of the International Zone falling halfway between. (In Algeria you pay forty-eight cents a gallon, while in France it is still higher.) The few Americans who live in Morocco are constantly making trips; one would think to hear them talk that they had all set themselves the same stint — that of knowing

every town in the land. "Here's a place I'll bet you've never been. . . . Let's see, what's it called? Hey, what was the name of that place we went last October, when we made the side-trip from Béni Mellal and it took all day and we had to go back and sleep in the tents again that night? You know, where the chain was across the road, and the soldier with the wooden leg had to telephone fifty miles away to his superior to get permission to let us through? Azilal! That's it! Azilal. I'll bet you've never been to Azilal. What a place!"

To the European, Morocco, southern Morocco particularly, is a vast and forbidding place (it is officially called "The Zone of Insecurity" by the French military), while to the average American it is a sort of exotic Utah whose touristic value is greatly enhanced by the fact that its southern border is nonexistent and that there are whole regions as yet unseen by tourists of any nationality. What with our new Moroccan air-bases and their large technical personnel, all this may change rapidly in the near future, so that after driving six days to get to some place like Tata or Tindouf one will find a party of one's countrymen already there, complete with Coca Cola and light-meters.

There is another sort of American whom one sees here nowadays with increasing frequency. He is usually in his early twenties, sometimes

wears a beard, and often goes in for clothing which is almost belligerently informal. The new "lost generation" which America turned loose on the world after the recent war is so thoroughly lost that the generation which came before seems undeserving of the epithet. Paris is still their proving-ground, but this time it is the Paris of the little Algerian joints behind the Bastille, incredibly sordid spots where they gather to study the preparation, use, and effects of the drug called *cannabis sativa*, known in its various forms as hashish, kif, and majoun.

Although a good many members of this new élite are connected with the arts in one way or another, it is a matter of common agreement that the fundamental aim in life is not self-expression, but the attainment of an indescribable and very personal state of ecstasy which is not (and must not be) related in any way to intellectual or artistic endeavor. It is a phenomenon worth considering, this new generation of nihilist mystics living on Veterans' Administration checks, Fulbright Fellowships, gifts from casual acquaintances, and occasional scraps from home. And it is of particular interest to us here because invariably they arrive in Tangier, which I suppose is the perfect place for them. Here they can get on their various kicks publicly and no one will object in the least; on the contrary, the quickest way to make friends in places where

Moslems gather is to bring out your *sebsi* and light up.

If your initiate has managed to achieve a state of illumination he can maintain it night and day, indefinitely, stretched out for hours in his favorite native café or lying on the beach in the sun. No one will register the slightest disapproval or surprise; after all, he is enjoying life the way the majority of people around him enjoy it. And since in general the members of the new lost generation are chronically low in funds (to work is an absurdity — almost a sacrilege), the extremely reasonable local prices of the drugs is a great drawing-card. For the equivalent of six cents they can buy enough *majoun* in the Calle Gzennaïa to transport them to an all-night nirvana.

Each week more new faces haunt the native cafés behind the Zoco Chico; while a few may be French, most of them are Americans, and they are in passionate pursuit of one thing: an absolute detachment from what is ordinarily called reality. (Sex they consider a very "low-grade kick.") Most of them are still faithful to be-bop as the most highly perfected musical expression of the desired spiritual state. For some reason (perhaps a purely physical one, since the drug, while it momentarily activates the mental faculties, is inclined to cause great bodily inertia), they seldom continue inland to other parts of Mo-

rocco, remaining instead indefinitely in Tangier. The adepts mind their own business, they talk very little, and they are not trying to prove anything. As cults go, it's a rather sympathetic one.

UNFORTUNATELY there is an increasing tendency, led by the Nationalists here in Morocco, to suppress, both by law and propaganda, all aspects of the native life which make the country picturesque to the visitor. It looks as if they hope to discourage tourists from coming, and, indeed, when one talks with them, one finds that this is perfectly true. For these Arab fanatics are firmly convinced that Westerners visit Morocco only to scoff at the customs and behavior of a backward people. It happens that the things which are of particular interest in Morocco are not of Arab importation, but indigenous to the country — that is, Berber. From the Nationalist point of view the Berbers are little better than animals, improperly Islamized and stubborn in their insistence upon clinging to their ancient rituals. Thus a great puritanical purge has been in progress for the past fifteen years or so, and will probably continue to go on, until every vestige of spontaneous pleasure in religious observances has been destroyed.

This year for the first time the celebration of the festival of Mouloud, the anniversary of Moham-

med's birthday, was forbidden in Tangier. What always has been a three-day carnival with parades, fireworks, public dancing, music, and crowds of native visitors from all parts of the country, was annihilated by one disapproving stroke of the pen. Reason (among the populace): the offerings of money carried by the celebrants to the mosques are appropriated by a few wealthy families — the Chorfa, or descendants of Mohammed. But since this has always been the case and no one has ever objected before, the argument does not hold water. Reason (among the informed): the Nationalists disapproved of the participation of women in the festivities, because it encouraged immorality! Religious dancing, the principal means of spiritual expression among the Berbers, is forbidden all over Morocco now; the Nationalists saw to that several years ago.

One wonders whether, if they were given free rein, they might not go as far as Ibn Saud in Arabia, who has carried his blue-nosed proclivities to the extent of prohibiting phonographs and radios (except for use in listening to news broadcasts) all over Arabia, because they play music. Music is evil. (One interesting clause in his code is that the police shall break the phonograph record over the head of the person who is found with it. If this seems merely amusing, let me add that the law is by no means benign. In

the case of the person caught with a bottle of beer or any other alcoholic concoction, the punishment is the same: the offending bottle must be destroyed against the head of the miscreant.)

The Moslem thinks of Communism about the way the city-dweller thinks of hoof-and-mouth disease: a dangerous malady, but not one by which he himself could possibly be affected. For him Communism is a disease peculiar to the Christian world; protected by the fortifications of his religion he feels secure from it.

Here in Morocco, as everywhere else, there is a Communist Party, but its adherents are French, Spanish, Corsican. When you find a Moslem member, he is usually from Algeria. (Algerians, unlike Moroccans, are French citizens.) If you talk with a Mohammedan Communist, he will usually end up by telling you that his interest in the movement is purely opportunistic. Once the colonial regimes are extirpated, he says, the Communist Party will have done its work. Then the local Nationalists will take over, and all will be well.

What is much more important is that a great many educated Moroccans, resenting the semi-colonial status of their country, unwittingly adopt an attitude which makes them singularly vulnerable to Stalinist propaganda. *Le Petit Marocain*, which has the largest circulation of

any daily newspaper in Morocco, follows the party line closely, never lets an opportunity slip for pointing out both the real and imagined injustices suffered by the people under the present government. The Communists support the Nationalists because any Nationalist gain upsets the status quo; a Nationalist *coup* would delight them. They could count on ensuing chaos, first of all because there are three distinct Nationalist parties which would be sure to disagree more violently than they do at present, but particularly because the Berbers, who form the majority of the population, are anti-Nationalist on the grounds that the movement is purely pro-Arab, and not interested in the Berbers at all.

It is always easy enough to induce the Berbers to form mass-demonstrations. The French did it a fortnight ago when they were trying to get the Sultan to remove certain members of the Istiqlal — the most powerful and radical of the three Nationalist parties — from among his advisors. Several thousand tribesmen riding their horses through the streets of Fèz would seem to have made an impression. There was also the advice given the Sultan by El Glaoui, Pacha of Marrakech, who is the Berbers' particular defender. In any case, the offending individuals were removed. But you can be sure the Nationalists will not take it lying down; their method is not that of passive resistance. To me

the whole thing is just one more bit of madness in an already mad world.

THESE POLITICAL considerations remind me of a ridiculous little adventure I had recently. I was walking along a country road several miles from Fez. Out of a dusty lane which led back into an olive grove came three Moroccans, one of whom I immediately recognized as an acquaintance. We exchanged greetings and I was presented to the others. Instead of continuing their walk, they pressed me to return with them to a house which was somewhere back in the grove, and have tea. The house, which belonged to a plump young man with thick glasses, was vast, ancient, and almost in ruins, but on an upper floor there proved to be one room that had been kept in comparative repair, and there we sat, drank tea, and talked at great length.

When we had exhausted America as a topic, we turned to Morocco. I had been reading several books of Moroccan history in French, and it was natural that I should bring up the subject of Bou Hamara, the rebel chieftain who dared defy two sultans, Abd el Aziz and Moulay Hafid, and who for seven years held all of eastern Morocco. It is a generally accepted fact that when Sultan Moulay Hafid seized Bou Hamara in 1909 he put him into a cage that was too small for him either to stand or sit in, had him carted about

through the streets of Moroccan cities for two years, during which time he was constantly tortured by the populace, and finally fed him to his pet lions. I had seen Bou Hamara's cage many times in the Batha, and I had also seen the empty lions' cages in the courtyard of the Sultan's palace. When I touched on the story, which everyone here knows by heart, I added that I thought it just as well that a sultan like Moulay Hafid should have been replaced by someone less bloodthirsty and savage. "He must have been a very peculiar man," I said. "Do you know anything about him?"

"A little," replied my host, removing his glasses. "He was my father."

And while I attempted to stammer some sort of apology, the son of the former sultan delivered me a lengthy lecture on the inadvisability of believing anything I read in French histories of Morocco. The French, he said, always attempted to justify their occupation of the country by pointing out that the inhabitants were barbarians and incapable of governing themselves, all of which sounded perfectly logical. But three nights ago I told the story as a joke on myself to an Arab here in Tangier. When I had finished, instead of laughing, he said very seriously: "Oh, but you were perfectly right. Moulay Hafid did throw Bou Hamara to the lions. I

know, because it was *my* father who was sent to Hagenbeck in Hamburg to buy the animals for the occasion. Only they were so tame and well-fed

that they wouldn't eat him."

So I am off for the south tomorrow; I can't stand this rain any longer.

Interview in Paris:

Isou Is Everything

JOSEPH BARRY

SURREALISM IS still alive!" André Breton insists and he receives the respect Paris accords only to the dead, for surrealism has become an advertisement painted by Dali. "Man is anguish!" mourns middle-aged existentialist Jean-Paul Sartre. "Man is forlorn."

"The new era of Man is beginning!" shouts epiphanist Henri Peruchot, "We must regain our primitive innocence." "We live in a vale of tears!" cries dolorist Julien Treppe. "So let us enjoy our suffering while yet we live." And the intimists led by René Sébille ("in the beginning was the couple") sing seductively of brotherly, sisterly, and other worldly *intimisme*.

All of which led, according to the lettrists, to *lettrisme*. Before interviewing its *chef de file*, M. Isidore Isou, the alpha and omega of *lettrisme*, I had read about his career in the French press, particularly the account in *Le Figaro Littéraire* titled "How to Become a Genius in

Five Lessons."

I also read and clipped for use Mr. Eugene Jolas' piece in *Transition* 48 called "From Jabberwocky to 'Lettrism'" and underlined his conclusion: "'Lettrism' is a valuable movement. Isou's own poems are often filled with a mysterious, fluid, and dynamic 'amplic' force. They remind us of cries and exclamations which are vital elements in carrying the emotional flux of a collective fraternity."

At the age of twenty-three, I discovered, M. Isou had two books published by Gallimard, France's leading publisher, and had announced the titles of ten more in preparation, including *The Construction of the Last Novel Possible*, *The Philosophy of Culture*, and *A Letter to Stalin*.

I left a note for M. Isou on a late Saturday afternoon at a bookstore where he often spent the evening thinking. At 8:05 the following Sunday morning M. Isou was on the

telephone, and we arranged a meeting at the Café Dupont, on Boulevard Saint-Michel. "You'll recognize me," he said, "I look poetic."

At the bar of Café Dupont was a dark, good-looking boy, in a pull-over and unpressed pants, darting quick, near-sighted glances about him. It was the leader of *lettrisme*.

"You should wear glasses," I said.

"I don't want to look intellectual," he answered, and we shook hands.

"Will you tell lies about me, like the others?" he asked.

"Probably," I said, "if you tell me lies," and I proceeded with the interview.

Briefly, M. Isidore Isou was born Isidore Goldstein, son of a wealthy grain merchant, in Botosami, Rumania, in 1925. When he came to Paris to study at the Sorbonne, he changed his name to Isou, the Rumanian diminutive for Isidore. In no time at all he was writing "lettrist" poetry and he and his followers were assaulting the ears of everybody in the cafés of the Latin Quarter.

ISOU'S POETRY consisted of arbitrary arrangements of letters (as in alphabet soup) plus fourteen sounds which included sneezes, coughs, cluckings, tsdings, and so on, which he rendered by means of symbols, so as to produce meaning sonorously or onomatopoeetically, if you prefer, rather than by conventional word patterns.

"Sure, I created scandals," M. Isou said. "why else would Gallimard have noticed me and published my books?"

"But this business of being a genius. In your book on 'A New Poetry,' you write, 'from Baudelaire all poets were nothing but steps towards Isou,' or, 'music has evolved from Debussy to Isidore Isou.' You can't be serious."

"I came to Paris because I am a great genius," M. Isou began, and then stopped. "No. You are right — that is comical. But to write you must have vanity. All great writers have vanity and besides it's practical. Why else would Gallimard have noticed me . . ."

"And now? I'm studying at the Sorbonne. You know how parents are. My father still supports me and I have to go to school. But I am writing a book on revolution. Do you realize that there are twelve million people between the ages of twelve and twenty-five in France? What a revolutionary mass to work with! Lenin had only a few hundred thousand bolsheviks. We will demand full citizenship for all youth of twelve. Why not, when old fools of sixty are allowed to vote?"

An hour later, M. Isou was going strong with quotations from Keynes, Adam Smith, Engels, Samuel Butler, Pirandello, and Isou. "But *lettrisme*?" I asked him. "Don't you have a school behind you that meets regularly in its own café?"

"Pooh!" M. Isou said. "People go into a café and never come out. They die there. Isidore Isou has greater plans."

Shortly after that particular chat he brought out a book called, *Isou or the Mechanics of Women*. It was found obscene by French authorities and after a trial, at which Jean Cocteau and other luminaries testified in behalf of its author, Isou went to the pokey for a month.

After he was released, Isou proceeded according to plan and wrote his *Treatise of Nuclear Economy. First Part: The Revolt of Youth, Vol. 1*. The Paris press reported a new Isou opus, *The Journals of the Gods (a novel), Preceded by an Essay on the Definition, Evolution and Complete Overturn of Prose and the Novel and a Defiant Preface of Maurice Lemaître*, and the newest, *Precisions on My Poetry and Me, Followed by 10 Magnificent Poems*. The last two were signed by Jean Isidore Isou.

In his *Defiant Preface*, Maurice Lemaître calmly pronounced that, "Indifferent to all opposition and silence raised against his theories, the future itself will make of Isou a greater economist than Marx."

M. Lemaître, you must understand, is only one of several devoted followers. A friend, he says, told someone recently, "If Isou tells me that you are a great man, then I will say you are a great man. If he tells me you are nothing, I will say you are nothing. If he tells me to take a

revolver and kill you, I will take a revolver and kill you."

Obviously it was time for another talk with Isou, so last week we met again. On this occasion our rendezvous was in the cutting room of a film studio in one of the northern suburbs of Paris. Isou was unprecedently late. I had time, before he finally arrived, to jot down the title of galley proofs for a new book, *Memoirs on the Future Forces of Plastic Arts and on Their Death*, and look through some of the loose cuttings of 35mm film hanging all around the room.

"I'm twenty-six years old now," he said sadly, when he finally arrived. "That's old, eh? But at thirty my work will be finished. After thirty? It's a dream. I can't tell you."

At the moment, Isou said, he was working on a movie to revolutionize movies. It will be three and a half hours long, cost about three thousand dollars, and have as its title, *Spit and Eternity*. It's supposed to be all about people in a movie talking about making a movie. "Something

As manager of the Paris Bureau of The New York Times Sunday Department, Joseph Barry has had ample opportunity to become acquainted with, and even to make studies of, the various flora and fauna on the famed Left Bank. He has written a book about these things, called An American in Paris, and W. W. Norton is going to publish it here this fall.

like Gide's *Counterfeiters*," Isou admitted, but added quickly, "I'm everything, like Orson Welles and Charlie Chaplin. I even find the money."

"My revolution? I'm organizing the youth, in the dark. The anarchists are with us already, but I don't have the time now. We need money. That's why we're making the movie. I'm my own publisher now, you know, because when my books sell, the others don't dare publish them and if they don't sell, they won't. I have people who leave their wives for me. You don't believe any more, but they do. You've passed the age of belief. You're married and a journalist. You're finished!"

"What," I asked, hurriedly, "is likely to happen with the revolution, or the world, for that matter?"

"You are like an American reporter interviewing Marx or Joyce," he answered, "asking about little things. Marx, Joyce, Baudelaire, I am they! How can I talk to you about little things? I write *Das Kapital*. I don't give a damn what happens. Cold war, hot war, who cares? The Americans and Russians will kill each other and leave us in peace. We're the eternal deserters."

FOR FULLY a quarter of an hour Isou developed his nuclear theory of youth acting on inert adults inside of society. During that time I could feel the spell he must weave around his listeners — a spell he himself is

in, but from which he emerges finally to regard his victims' trance. "What do you really think of me?" he asked suddenly.

With an effort, I began, "You have an extraordinary energy that is dissipated by . . ."

"Everyone says that," Isou interrupted. "I know people think I am crazy doing poetry, movies, novels, everything. But I must put an end to the old nonsense first. I write a book and bang! the old poetry is dead. I write another book and bang! social theories are changed forever. I write another and bang! prose is revolutionized. My method of work is the key to all creation. After me medicine, painting, movies, everything will be changed and people will be working in a post-Isou world."

At this point a follower of Isou rushed in. "Breton says he can't help," he panted. "He says he doesn't know where to get any money."

Isou turned to me. "Can you introduce me to rich Americans?"

"I can give you some advice."

"I don't want advice, I want money. Books and movies take lots of money and we need it."

Isou's follower glared at me. "I killed my mother for Isou, how about you?"

Isou shrugged deprecatingly and said, "All I'm asking from *you* is money."

I had trouble getting out of the place.

Underworld Confidential:

VIRGINIA HILL'S SUCCESS SECRETS

LEE MORTIMER

VIRGINIA HILL HAUSER has always been, to say the very least, a lively figure in the press, managing to get herself featured in any number of diverse stories, anecdotes, and myths. But she never quite struck the national imagination in full force until she was given the female lead in the recent Kefauver hearings. It wasn't the best role she's ever had but it was incontestably the best audience. She came through in very fine style and though she wasn't exactly anonymous before, she is now an American household name — known to as many people as Joe DiMaggio or Betty Grable or the Bendix washer.

Like most names that dance in the headlines, Virginia Hill has come

to stand for something, a popular image that existed long before the real person. In Virginia's case it is that of the typical gunman's moll, flamboyantly beautiful, tough as a bullet-proof vest, and ready to defy society at the drop of an accusation.

In a way, to a great many Americans, the gangster is the last figure to keep the Horatio Alger spirit alive — with a perverse twist — from the gutter to the penthouse in easy stages. All you have to do is dodge bullets, income-tax inspectors, and crime committees. Virginia is a Horatio Alger character herself, and one of the most spectacular. Until she was seventeen, she never owned or wore a pair of shoes. Five years later she was paying a hundred

dollars apiece for imputed French pumps. She is living, alty testimony to the fact that the spirit of the frontiers is not dead and the gold-rush days not over. If she can do it, so can any red-blooded American girl — but I don't think Dale Carnegie would advise most of them to try.

To her other triumphs, Virginia can now add the distinction of having had more sheer fiction printed about her than any other figure of recent years. But the reporters didn't have to make it up. She created her own story. The greater part of her testimony in her appearance as queen of the Kefauver Mardi Gras was pure hokum. Her stories were not only apt and colorful, but she had all the Thespian qualities necessary to make them convincing. The stage lost a great performer when she decided to enter upon her self-confessed career of picking horses and men that never lose. The committee had decided wisely to handle her with kid gloves after being knocked for a loop in the secret sessions. She hardly even needed a rehearsal — she's been up against much tougher audiences and never yet has laid an egg.

I don't know if Virginia was born with her talent for histrionics or developed it out of necessity. After a long career of continuous performing, by now she probably doesn't exactly know where her real moods end and make-believe begins. A

lady of naturally vivacious and changeable temperament, she seems to turn her emotions off and on from a concealed switchboard. One moment she plays dumb, a second later she is shrewd and shrewish. Dulcet-voiced and sentimental in one turn of her act, in the next she is shameless enough to burn the cars off a brass monkey. She sold the American public the idea that she was a venal tramp, which she isn't. Even Broadway columnists who are supposed to be specialists at diagnosing phony acts fell for it. None of us ever heard of a girl working hard to pass herself off as a lady for hire. Actually, Virginia never gets paid for love. She is more apt to do the paying. At least she always has since she passed her twentieth birthday.

THERE WERE A few seeds of fact in the hothouse story she set blooming in front of the committee. She did light out from Bessemer, Alabama, when she was sixteen and read for the hard pavements and bright lights of Chicago. She did work as a hash-slinger during the World's Fair and then meet Joe Epstein, whom she describes as her "accountant"; and he did play Fairy Godmother to her Cinderella.

From there on in, the history of the Cleopatra of the underworld does not run according to the scenario. Epstein was an accountant, true enough. He was also a big-time

bookie and a gambler and still is. Through him, the gorgeous refugee from a squalid Alabama steel-town met and mingled with the hierarchs of Chicago hoodlumry — a bunch of outstanding, well-heeled citizens who liked to toss thousand-dollar bills to pretty girls when they weren't busy burning their legs off or encasing their shapely bodies in barrels of cement.

Virginia was simply too smart and talented to become a gun-moll and end up face down in an alley. Or maybe it was just fate. She is one of those unique people who seem to fall into situations especially suited to their gifts. With all their wealth and power, the top gangsters still found many impediments in the way of their operations, particularly in the communications departments. The underworld bosses never know who is prying into their affairs or when or how. Wires can be tapped. Letters can be intercepted. And they don't dare to meet publicly because detectives can tail them and build grounds for a conspiracy indictment from circumstantial evidence. Most states have statutes on the books making it an offense for two or more criminals to "consort" with each other. These laws are not frequently enforced, but they can prove lethal in the hands of a crusading D.A. or police chief.

These stumbling blocks to gangdom were Virginia's hurdles to suc-

cess. She carved out a role for herself as gangland's go-between, courier to the 'big shots and finally a big shot herself. She posed as the beautiful-but-dumb Sweetheart of the Syndicate, and the police naturally fell for it, because there was nothing to contradict it and there were a hundred others like her. As a supposed pushover for the gangsters, she was free to mingle with them and pass their business messages back and forth. If occasionally she did more than make deliveries to them, it was strictly for relaxation.

To make a success of her career she had to be more than just another set of curves. She had to have a good memory, a considerable flair for hole-in-the-corner diplomacy to allay the suspicions of trigger-happy killers, and a dual personality, close-lipped about essentials and able to chatter freely and apparently foolishly about inconsequential. The Kefauver committee got both barrels.

She went right to the top in the Windy City and branched out from there. In the late Thirties, when the Syndicates were putting the finishing touches to their national organization and the Mafia had all but perfected its inter-state hook-up,

The first article of this series by columnist Lee Mortimer — "Will Kefauver Be President?" — appeared in the May issue of THE MERCURY.

the strategy required someone to travel between Chicago and New York to make contact with Costello and others. The job fell into Virginia's lap and she blazed into New York like a prairie fire. She was a wonderful actress even then, and had all of Broadway bamboozled from the very first day. She actually took dramatic lessons for a while at the American Academy, but quit soon because she didn't need them. In any case, it was chiefly window-dressing for her real work.

She was a mighty stunning girl then, as she still is. What with her looks, expensive gowns, vivacity, and non-stop spending, she naturally cut a fabulous swathe down the Main Stem. Of course she needed background and an explanation for her bottomless purse, both of which she promptly furnished. She was, she told friends between cocktails, a Southern society girl who had been married to four rich husbands. All either got divorced or graciously died but, in either case, she received a million from each. I believed her. So did everybody else, including the New York society columns. She moved about freely in the top layers of saloon and night-club aristocracy. One of the first people she had to contact was Joe Adonis, whom she contrived to meet, as if by accident, in a night-club. After which everyone began assuming that she was his woman and that he was footing her bills.

I first met her near the end of the Thirties when she was tossing money around like a gold-pro prospector after a big strike. She could be seen on Broadway night after night, traveling about with a dozen or more free-loaders who went with her from club to club while she picked up the checks. Her entourage usually included a couple of Latin gigolos, chiefly there as rhumba partners, though she later married one.

It was her love of the rhumba that first got her into her highly publicized flyer as part-owner of the Hurricane, a night-club venture which the crime-busters jumped confidently into, certain that Virginia was engaged in some kind of subversive activity with Syndicate dough. Actually it was a whim, the result of a friendly gesture to Paul Berney, a Broadway personality without visible means who happened to be one of the most accomplished rhumba-dancers in town. Along with Dave Wolper, a lawyer who had represented Berney's first wife in a divorce action, and then married her himself, Berney was running the Waikiki, a broken-down 52nd Street nightclub they had picked up for about \$500. Virginia used to end up her rounds at the Waikiki to dance with Berney.

THE HURRICANE, at this time, was having a tough go of it financially. It was originally started by friends of George Raft, who allowed

them to use his name for credit purposes although he was not actually backing it. When the Hurricane started hitting the downgrade, it was offered to Berney and Wolper at a low figure. They buttonholed Virginia and told her she was silly to spend money in nightclubs when she could run her own. It sounded like fun to Virginia. After the first night she got bored with her new toy and took her guests elsewhere. A week later she casually tossed her stock certificates into Wolper's lap and said, "It's all yours."

About this time, Kings County District Attorney O'Dwyer was very anxious to have a long, serious interview with Benjamin "Bugsy" Siegel. Siegel had been a partner in the notorious Meyer-Bug mob credited with having materially lowered the population of Manhattan and Brooklyn. Siegel apparently wanted to avoid conversation badly enough to move out to Hollywood, where he quickly became a romantic fixture in the film colony's more exclusive set. The black-haired, blue-eyed Bug, who some people considered the handsomest male in the country, looked more like a movie-gangster than anybody on the screen. The cinema tough-guys were so impressed that they carefully imitated his style, while the Bug, an impressive boy himself and conscious of his own sinister charms, responded by adding the mannerisms of the screen-killers to his own set. You

couldn't tell who originated what.

Bug was a big wheel in the underworld, which doesn't do things in hit-or-miss fashion. He had to keep in constant touch with New York headquarters. He began to run into the usual difficulties. And Virginia packed her copious trunks and came to Hollywood on a vacation. She carried a note of introduction from Joe Adonis to Benny Siegel. He took her around to the Sunset Boulevard nightclubs, toured the studios with her and introduced her to the stars — all of whom, with their low-speed mentalities, were thrilled to be on calling terms with a real life gunman and his moll.

Rumors began to circulate that the Bug had stolen Adonis' girl. Gossip said a trans-continental gang war was in the making over the theft of the Helen of Bessemer, Alabama. Adonis would storm the gates of Hollywood and carry back his prize. Virginia added fuel to the flames by taking off to New York, ostensibly to pacify her lover. Then she went back to Hollywood. Soon she was commuting between her two supposed lovers. Only — she wasn't carrying love notes, but crisp executive messages — reports from Siegel on his projects and memos from New York on shipments of slot-machines, dope, gunmen, and similar commodities.

In Hollywood, Virginia outdid herself in lavish spending. Her parties were more expensive and fabu-

lous than anything I have ever heard of, including the fictional ones in *The Great Gatsby*.

Once, during the war, while I was on a brief visit to Hollywood, a press-agent asked me to be guest of honor for the night at the Clover Club, an estimable deadfall then on its last legs. Virginia heard about the festivities and reserved a cozy table for twenty guests including some members of what could be called Hollywood's upper-bracket. Another spender, with a war-boom fortune, wanted to outdo her and brought along forty people. He ordered champagne for them. Because of shipping shortages, the management restricted him to the domestic variety and only one bottle per guest. Virginia's guests not only got two bottles each, but imported stuff of the best quality. It broke the amateur spender's heart.

IT WAS SHORTLY afterward that I introduced her to Carl Laemmle, Jr., who had just been mustered out of the army. Junior Laemmle was, and still is, the most eligible bachelor in Hollywood, heir to the founder of Universal Pictures and worth some forty or fifty million odd-dollars. The most attractive women in Hollywood, which means at least some of the most beautiful ladies in the world, had been hunting him like a fox for years, but getting nowhere. Until he met Virginia he was also a severe hypochondriac and a

teetotaler. Virginia is a champagne fiend who likes the stuff in tumblers. That night Junior downed his first glass of champagne. Both it and the girl impressed him favorably. After a wild courtship, he proposed to her. She turned him down.

The money meant nothing to Virginia. She was in a business where forty million was just another figure in the accounts. Nor did the glamor interest her. After the friendship was over, she talked freely about Laemmle. She said she liked him a lot, but, "What do you think he gave me for Christmas? I would have liked a little piece of jewelry to remember him by. I got a bottle of perfume."

It was a case of adding insult to economy. Siegel was the king of the perfume smuggling racket. The plushy mansion she shared with Benny often contained a million dollars worth of assorted, contraband fine smells.

In 1947, when a fusillade of shots from a carbine concealed in the bushes around her lawn eliminated Siegel, Virginia just happened to be six thousand miles away from the scene. There should have been soft, plaintive music when she told the Senators about the heartbreaking lovers' quarrel that drove her to leave Hollywood and console herself in Paris.

Actually, Virginia must have known that Siegel was on the spot. I was pretty sure myself. A few

weeks before the assassination, I ran into a formidable delegation of Eastern hoods in front of a Beverly Hills hotel. I asked what they were up to. "Nothing much," they answered. "We just came out to see what that nut Siegel is doing with our six million bucks in the Flamingo."

Shortly after this, Virginia hopped a plane for Europe. There are two stories about that trip in addition to her own dreamy delightful prose poem mentioned above. One is that she went over to phone "Lucky" Luciano, then somewhere in Italy, and plead for Siegel's life — without the wires being tapped. The other was that Virginia, who was high in mob counsels, simply wanted to put an ocean between her and the corpse-elect. While the first story is sweeter the second is obviously more reasonable. The night after the execution of Siegel, she went out dancing in Paris. As I have intimated, Siegel was, in real life, not her sweetheart but only her business partner. Virginia not only had boy friends to spare, but actually married a swarthy night-club singer while she was still hanging her minks in Siegel's closet.

After Siegel's funeral, Virginia became an object of considerable fascination to the local, state, and national authorities. One of the enforcement agencies of the U. S. Treasury decided to keep a very hush-hush running file on the little

girl from the Southern steel town. I managed to have the report sneaked out to me overnight and replaced the next morning. I discovered that, after earnest and painstaking investigation, using every device of modern science — tapping phones, steaming open letters — the Feds had succeeded in piecing together a sharp picture of her precise position and standing in the underworld. The conclusion they reached is that Virginia functions as a kind of central clearing-house for organized crime in this country. Even her most innocent calls and letters, they believe, are code messages concerning large-scale operations. If a letter from Joe Adonis mentions a special two-pound box of chocolates, it may refer to a narcotics shipment. If someone writes "love and kisses," your guess is as good as mine.

Virginia's dossier indicates that she is useful to the Syndicate not only in maintaining internal communications, but in establishing liaison with supposedly respectable people outside it. Virginia is suited for the role because she has consciously built herself up as a "character." It is considered natural for legitimate and even prominent people to be seen "slumming" with her. If a supposedly honest businessman hobnobs with her, it is "purely for laughs." Sometimes it really is.

When Virginia returned from her trip abroad, she detoured to Mexico before the California police could

pick her up. In Mexico City and Acapulco, she was easily the most colorful member of the American colony. Siegel's death did not apparently reduce her income.

After a short period, the papers reported a succession of attempted suicides by Virginia. Actually she took just enough sleeping pills to make it look serious. It was reported that she was despondent and wanted to end it all. In reality, it was her own little device for warning the big boys in New York and Chicago not to dream of cutting her off or out.

In a safe-deposit vault, addressed to the district attorney of Los Angeles, is airtight evidence that can send ten of the most important underworld figures to the chair for their part in Siegel's murder. This document gets delivered in the event of her death. It is good

for a lifelong annuity and insurance policy. After each suicide attempt, her remittances were promptly forthcoming.

LAST YEAR, Virginia made a grand tour of the country, carefully avoiding the jurisdiction of the Los Angeles County grand jury. While she was in Sun Valley she met the Austrian ski-instructor whom she was later to marry. The bridal party thrown in the old Brown Palace Hotel in Denver, fully equaled, in sheer lavishness and scope, anything that has ever been witnessed in this country. The master of ceremonies, who made all the arrangements for the bridal supper and paid all the bills for the party, signed the hotel register "E. Costello." Frank Costello has a brother named "Eddie." Make of it what you will.



CHANDLER BROSSARD

*Vacation**for**Three*

GEORGE STEPPED into the shower and turned on the cold water. He was shivering and rubbing himself hard on the chest and legs when Jimmy called from outside the cabin. "George! Are you up?"

"Yes!" George shouted.

Jimmy walked into the one-room cabin and to the shower box. He stood there watching George. "I thought you would still be sleeping," he said. "Margaret's making breakfast."

"I'll be ready in a minute, Jimmy," George said. He was washing the soap off now.

"I'll wait then and we can walk back together." Jimmy sat down now on the edge of the cot. George stepped out of the shower and began to dry himself. Jimmy watched him.

"This was a swell idea of yours to fish Key West, George," he said. "I've never been down that far."

"I've always wanted to see the place," George said. "I'm glad we can all see it for the first time together."

"I'm sorry we're so broke. I'll have to pay you our share in a couple of weeks."

"No you won't," George said. "This was my idea. Everything's on me."

"But it'll cost you too much."

"Stop thinking about it."

Jimmy smiled and shook his head. Then he said, "You're looking great, you know that? You're looking better than I've ever seen you look."

"I feel it too," George said, putting on his shirt. "I feel terrific."

"This vacation is doing you a lot of good. I was pretty worried about

you. From the way you wrote everything seemed to be going to pieces with you in New York."

"All that is finished now," George said. He began tying his shoe laces. "Thank God for that."

"That was no life for you, George. Living with Betty and her kid and working in that damn place at the same time. You were killing yourself."

"I know it."

"When are you going to quit that job and start to live the way you want to?"

"As soon as everything is right for it," George said. He finished brushing his hair. "I'll quit when I'm set." He put on his fishing cap. "Well, I'm ready."

Jimmy got up and they walked out of the cabin. The sun was just up. They walked through the lot past the rows of tourist cabins and toward the trailer camp across the street. The early morning Florida air was clear and sharp. The palms on the lot were moving in the early morning breeze.

"I envy you and Margaret," George said as they walked along. "You seem to be doing very well together."

"It's just what I needed after the army. I wish you would do it this way."

"I will," said George. "It takes a little time though."

They crossed the highway now and entered the trailer camp on the

other side. Nobody was around on the grounds. The trailers were all dark still except for Jimmy's trailer at the very end of one row. They walked along the sandy drive toward Jimmy's trailer. The weather looked fine to be starting out on the trip. As they came near the trailer Jimmy slapped George on the shoulder. "Gee it's good to see you, George, after all this time."

"Yeah," George said, smiling.

"Margaret wanted to see you just as much as I did. I want you to know each other better now."

"She's a good kid. When is she going to have the baby?"

"In four months."

"You happy about it?"

"I want it very much now."

They walked up the three-step ladder and into the trailer.

WHEN they had finished eating breakfast George went to the ice box and took out the chicken. He began to clean the chicken parts under the water faucet.

Margaret got up quickly from the breakfast table. "That's all right, George," she said, coming up to him. "I'll do it. You sit down and talk to Jimmy."

"But I'd like to do it," George said. "I thought I would fix it the way Jimmy and I used to have it." He kept washing the chicken under the faucet. Margaret stood next to him with her hands on her hips. She was quite fat. Jimmy sat at the

table and watched them.

"Aw, we don't need anything special," she said. "We have to get going you know."

"This won't take any time," George said. He put the frying pan on the stove and poured the bacon grease into it.

"O.K. then, you do it," she said. She went to the breakfast table. "What else do you want besides the chicken?" she asked Jimmy.

"I don't know, baby," he said. "It doesn't make any difference. Let's have whatever you want."

"I'll fix some lettuce and tomato sandwiches," she said. "How will that be, George?"

"O.K. by me, Margaret," he said.

"Jimmy," Margaret said, "you'd better get up and get the truck ready. Don't just sit there looking sleepy."

"All right, honey," he said. He got up and kissed her and went outside.

Margaret went up to George. "How is it coming?"

"Fine," he said. "Just fine. It will be done in a few minutes."

"Need any help?"

"I don't think so, thanks."

Margaret took the tomatoes out of the ice box.

Outside Jimmy finished pulling the canvas over the stuff in the back of the Ford truck. Margaret got in front first. Jimmy said, "Would you like to drive, George?"

"Sure," George said. He started

walking around the front of the truck.

"I don't think it's a very good idea," Margaret said. "You know George doesn't have a permit, Jimmy."

George and Jimmy looked at each other across the hood of the truck. "I guess it would be sort of risky," Jimmy said. "They have some pretty snotty cops around here, George."

George shrugged his shoulders. "O.K." He and Jimmy got in now. It was a close fit. Margaret was very fat with the baby.

They drove seventy-five miles on smooth straight roads through several small towns before they reached the Everglades. It was easy driving. There were very few cars on the roads that early in the day. In between each small town there were long stretches of land covered only with scrub brush and a few stunted trees. At different times they frightened four buzzards that were feeding on the side of the road. They were big birds and they rose slowly, wide-winged and vicious looking, from their feeding into the air when the truck came near them.

"I hate those birds," Margaret said. "They're so lonely and nasty looking."

They stopped at a diner on the edge of the Everglades. They ordered coffee and Margaret had a honey roll. "George, remember when we used to collect all the

bottles in the studio so that we could get money for breakfast?" Jimmy said.

"I'll say I do. And the time you tried to get the Greek to take one of your paintings in exchange for a meal ticket for us."

"You should have been ashamed of yourselves," Margaret said. "Why didn't you ever look for jobs?"

"They were hard to get," George said. "Besides, we were having a good time."

"We did have a good time too, didn't we, George?" Jimmy said.

"I'll say we did."

"I can imagine," Margaret said. "I can just imagine."

Jimmy finished his coffee and asked the counter man if he could buy some pieces of bacon rind for bait. The counter man said yes and he took some scraps from the ice box and said five cents would be all right.

"I thought we might fish along the road, just for kicks," Jimmy said to George. "A warm-up for Key West."

Going out to the truck, Jimmy said, "Maybe we'll get some catfish. They like bacon." He got in the truck, then got back out. "You drive for a while, George," he said. "I'll rest."

"Swell," George said. He got out and went around to the driver's seat. Margaret did not say anything.

The highway now entered the Everglades. The heavy growth of

palms and cypresses began just a few feet off the sides of the road. A small stream ran along the left side of the road. Driving slowly, they watched for fish leaping up out of the water. They drove like this for almost an hour. Now they approached a pool in the stream. A large palm tree overhung the pool.

"This looks like a good place to stop," Jimmy said.

"Great," George said. "I'm really hungry."

George parked the truck on the grass on the side of the road. Margaret took the food from under the canvas and George and Jimmy got the fishing rods out. It was getting hot now. Two cars drove by going very fast.

"How do you feel, baby?" Jimmy asked Margaret.

"A little cramped in the legs. Otherwise I guess I'm all right."

Jimmy slapped her gently on the behind. Now they crossed the road and walked under the big palm tree overhanging the pool. "Watch out for snakes," Margaret said.

IT WAS COOL there under the big palm tree. They ate the chicken George had fried and drank a bottle of white wine. Margaret took one drink of the wine. George and Jimmy after they had finished their chicken said they did not want any sandwiches. Margaret ate half a sandwich, washing it down with water from the thermos bottle.

The pool was clear all the way to the bottom. They could see several brown speckled garfish and what seemed to be catfish. The garfish stayed in one place together in stiff unmoving angles. The other fish moved fatly and slowly and in ones through the still clearness of the pool. They were gray and whiskered.

Jimmy baited the hooks with the bacon rind. He gave one of the rods to George. "You can fish with mine when you want to," he said to Margaret.

"I think I'll just sit here and watch you two experts," she said, smiling.

Jimmy walked to the other end of the pool and dropped his line in. George stayed where he was near Margaret. He watched the bait hanging there in the still clear water and waited for the fish to come to it. None of the fish came near it for several minutes. Then one of the fat gray fish swam slowly toward it. The garfish stayed stiffly together in speckled angles, unmoving. Now the fat gray fish stopped a foot from the bait. It hung there, fat and just fin moving, for several minutes. Finally it swam to the bait, almost touching it. It stayed there, fin moving. It took the bait. George jerked the rod and the fish spit out the bait and swam off.

"Damn it to hell," George said.

Margaret laughed. "It takes prac-

tice, George."

"You're right," he said. "I'm not so good at this."

He put the line back in, this time near the garfish. He looked toward Jimmy. "Anything happening, Jimmy?"

"Nothing. They aren't taking the bait."

Jimmy came back in a few minutes. "Something's wrong," he said. "Maybe they go only for live bait. I've never fished this kind before."

"We may as well go," George said. He reeled in.

Margaret yawned. "I don't know what we would have done with them even if you had caught any," she said.

"It's just for the fun," said Jimmy.

Margaret picked up the bag of chicken bones. She went to the edge of the pool and threw the bones near the garfish hanging stiffly together. The fish moved toward the bones, then let them sink to the bottom without going after them.

"Something's wrong with these fish all right," said Margaret. "They don't like the chicken either."

Now they walked back across the highway to the truck. Jimmy drove. "We must be about halfway there by now," Margaret said as they started up.

But neither Jimmy nor George said anything.

the art of being a nobody

ERIC MANNERS

FOR A GOOD many years I have had the same family doctor. If you were to ask me why I respect him, I suppose I might dredge up several sensible reasons, such as his degrees from universities, his work in research, and so on. They'd be true enough, but I doubt if they'd be the real reason. The real reason for my respect, I rather think, lies in what the doctor eats for breakfast. He starts his day with a bowl of cereal on which he places a dollop of ice cream.

Mind you, he doesn't boast about

this. He doesn't cultivate and flaunt the thing as an impressive affectation. He just eats that breakfast because that's what he likes to eat for breakfast. He's been doing it for years, and I found out about it only by accident when I made an early call on him one morning.

You and I are fond of a notion that nowadays we are wonderfully independent and emancipated. We're not ruled any more by "Authority," we like to say. No more of that medieval business of being told what to think and what not to think. These days, our story goes, each of us thinks things out for himself. We're on our own. That's what we say to ourselves. Is it true? No, unfortunately, it isn't.

We are today authority-dominated to the point of abjectness. We are handed (and accept) more advice, more counsels as to what is right and what is wrong, more urgings to a docile conformity, more authoritarian They-Says, than any creatures calling themselves free should dream of bearing.

Does that seem to be pitching it too strong? Tell me: What did you think of the doctor's breakfast? Fantastic? Absurd, affected, not-American, "wrong"? There isn't anything wrong about it except its evidence of a quiet-minded temper that used to be called independence, and an almost lost art that used to be called being oneself. There's nothing wrong with the doctor. It's

you and I and all the rest of us who are in danger of going off the rails, or, to put it in a more exact and terrifying way, who are in danger of going *on* the rails — letting ourselves be persuaded onto the confining and directing rails of an endless conformity. Rails are a good thing for a train. They are a bad thing for the human spirit.

There is no counting the publications today devoted entirely to handing us “rules” for rightly forming our characters, rules for dressing right and eating right and speaking right and rightly getting ahead in the world and having marital intercourse at exactly suitable intervals. Even in many of our general periodicals, these “How To” directives have become as much a staple as the masthead. “How To” has been erected into an omnipresent instruction, and we sit around with our mouths open, taking it in, more devoutly than a thirteenth century shepherd ever listened for the latest word from Rome. Budget your time. Correct your posture. See your dentist. Overcome your shyness. Write correct Business English. Do these exercises after forty. Just follow these rules and you too can join a standardized populace in one great gray goo of bumpless similarity.

THAT’S THE way it is; and I think it is perilous. I think the time is at hand, if it isn’t suddenly going to

turn out to be too late, for a sublime burst of putting ice cream on our cereal. This is the hour for our finding, in a flash of ancient glory revived, the art of standing in just exactly the posture that comes congenially to us, speaking a language that is the native speech issuing from our own personality, let the Better Business English fall where it may, and having as much or as little marital intercourse as is mutually right for two living, breathing, uniquely individual human beings, making up their own minds out of love and out of the vivid intimacy of here-and-now, not out of the text of a manual. I urge a very old truth: You don’t “form character”, or “get ahead” or even “become more attractive to others” by doing anything so degrading as following a set of instructions. You do it by being somebody; and the somebody for you to be is yourself. If you are ever going to be somebody at all, it can only be by being that. All you can learn by listening to rules and sedulously conforming your life to them is the hideous art of how to be nobody at all.

Think over for a minute the people we have known who have most memorably seemed to have “character.” Think over the ones who have seemed most interesting, most integrated, most truly — at the deep levels — “adjusted” to the astounding adventure of being a conscious, free-willed, creative, ideal-

harboring human being under the sun. How many of these have been bound to the rails of the everlasting orthodoxies of a horrible How-To? How-To says that the right way to get rested is to sleep eight hours a night. Thomas Edison, listening not to How-To but to the direct inner voice of his own personal self and its needs, slept four. A friend of mine who's a physicist sleeps eleven. That's the natural sleep-way for him, and he's much too much of a man to be put off by some small-minded conformist's thinking it's funny.

Eight hours sleep? Hang all that How-To. You're *you*. You have your own unique identity to follow, your own special vision to serve. Follow that star, that dream, follow the *you*; and go right ahead, if it's truly a part of the youness of you, and sleep if you like in a tree. (Charles Waterton, the grand old English naturalist and grander individualist, used to do that every now and then. He said it gave him the right tuning for feeling like a piece of God's creation, along with the chimpanzees and the owls.) How-To would have it that you must polish and adjust your way of speaking so that no infinitive ever gets split and no participle ever dangles and the sound of you becomes indistinguishable from the sound of every radio announcer. Henry Ward Beecher didn't do anything like that. He spoke *his* way. He poured

out his heart, and the honest innermost stuff of his honest innermost self, and it made him the greatest orator of his day. He was somebody; which is to say he was himself. Sometimes, in the course of it, he used words in an unconventional way, or bent formalities of grammar to his purpose. Once, when he'd done so, a lady came up to him after the sermon and reproved him. "Madam," he said, "I am Henry Ward Beecher. If the English language gets in my way, God help it."

Is your native personality of a rather shy and diffident sort? How-To says you must overcome that. You must conform, so to speak, to standard brass. Young Charles Darwin didn't. He was so shy that he became almost sick when he had to mix in gatherings of more important people. So instead he just went on being Charles Darwin, and followed his star into long lonely contemplations; and he came up with the Theory of Evolution. The non-mixer, by non-mixing, became the most important man and the most sought-after social lion in England.

"They say" . . . "The proper thing" . . . "Experts tell us" . . . "The correct rule is" . . . What sort of Authoritarianism is that, for free men to let it dull their lives into a drearily bullied just-like-everybody-elseness? What do *you* know? What do *you* say? What have you proved to yourself by the honest light of your own mind?

NO MORE How-To, please. No more thinking that the only right way to think is to think like all the thinkers who want to do the thinking for us. We hear a lot, Sundays, about our souls. There remains to be lived the great adventure, seven days a week, of *being* souls—which means being individuals, being spirits with the gift of freedom, being ourselves. Do these exercises after forty? Well, if we've made up our minds that that's the right thing for us, surely. But, if we've decided that it isn't . . . there was once a non-exerciser who got as fat as a buttertub. It didn't seem to prevent his being a worthwhile personality. His name was Thomas Aquinas. Budget your time? If that's the way that's best for you, do it by all means. But if

you find it's better for you to live in a furious blaze of activity for twenty hours at a stretch—if the light you need to light your personal vision comes best from burning a candle at both ends—well, an old friend of mine lived that way, and the self that came of it was a self worth being. She was Edna St. Vincent Millay.

There is a threat in the air, these days, and it seems to me we want to watch out for it. It has already gone dangerously far in having its way with us. It's the threat of our being thought for, ruled, regulated, pushed around, made into Things. There is only one weapon against that. The weapon is our self: your self, my self, the everlastingly unique and incalculable reality that is a human soul.



SHOULD WE DEFER THE HIGH IQ'S?

BERGEN EVANS

THE PROPOSAL, made by the advisory group to the Selective Service Board, that students with high grades and high IQ's should be deferred from military service, has much to recommend it. Trained intelligence is one of our greatest national assets and should be protected and developed. The line between soldier and civilian — once so clear that civilians were often granted passports (as was Laurence Sterne) to pass through their enemy's lines on business or even pleasure — is now almost metaphysical. The chemist, the metallurgist, the physicist, and the bacteriologist are as important as the infantryman and the aviator.

But in using the phrase "trained intelligence" we must put the emphasis on the word "trained." The day of belief in the innate superiority of western whites has gone. Among the innumerable hordes of

Russia and Asia there are, in all likelihood, as many intelligent men as there are in Europe and America. But, fortunately for us, the communists have not yet the facilities to train these men and, even if they had, their insistence on subordinating all knowledge to politics would prevent them from equaling us.

It is, therefore, wise to make the most of our immense educational system. An empty classroom could be a greater loss to defense than an idle assembly line, and efficiency in both cases requires a constant supply of suitable raw materials.

Everyone agrees on this. But there is a lot of disagreement about what constitutes suitable raw material for the colleges and how a supply of it is to be maintained.

The essence of the advisory group's recommendation is that the present college faculties should —

through the administration of intelligence tests and the awarding of grades — be given the power to decide which men shall be deferred.

But very few college teachers would want to make a decision of such importance on such uncertain bases. Faith in intelligence tests, even among those who give them, is far from universal. It is very difficult to frame one that does not make agreement with the basic assumptions of the examiner at least one indication of intelligence. And faith in intelligence testers is even less than faith in intelligence tests. If a poll were taken, those who devise and mark such tests would not be likely to be considered, by either their colleagues or their students, to be the most intelligent among their respective faculties. They are often, indeed, dullards, of less than average information and mental quickness, who find in endless grading a refuge from the demands of creative work. Unimaginative, they would be the last persons on earth to entrust with the recognition of imagination in others, yet imagination is a cardinal element in the complex we call intelligence.

Grades are an even poorer criterion of intelligence. There are too many variables, too many exceptions, too many doubts. A high grade *may* indicate a high intelligence, but it *may* indicate a cheat, a flatterer, a grind, or even a loose eye and a firm bosom. More seriously, it

may — and probably often does — indicate that the student has no pronounced views of his own. Disagreement with the instructor is rarely rewarded with an A, and it is the essence of high intelligence, as apart from mere high skill, that it must be original and self-reliant. No, it's all right to let a Phi Beta Kappa key, a *summa cum laude*, a graduate fellowship or some such trifle be decided by grades. But military deferment is a matter of life and death, perhaps to the nation as well as to the individual.

THERE ARE even more serious objections to the proposal. What it actually recommends — assuming that intellectual superiority can, somehow, be definitely recognized — is not the deferment of the intellectually superior among our young men but the deferment of the intellectually superior *among that segment of the population which can afford to go to college*. Surely a distinction worth italicizing. True tests have shown, or have claimed to show, that college populations have a much higher percentage of those with high IQ's than has the population at large. And it may be so. But these tests have been conducted by college professors — the only ones competent to conduct them, but still a group that derives advantage from their findings and stands to derive further advantage (now that salaries are generally paid out of tui-

tion) from keeping college enrollments up. And college students are still, by and large, recruited from well-to-do families. So that the recommendation tends to defer the sons of the well-to-do and assures the payment of tuition by any family that can scrape it together to keep a son out of the army.

The effect on the morale of the rest of the army would be bad. The technical knowledge and skill required by modern warfare are so high that, of necessity, our armed forces have been largely officered by college men, men whom the common soldier might easily be persuaded to regard as "the rich." There was some sullen annoyance about this in the last war and it might easily be fanned into open resentment by the proper propaganda. And if, in addition, the "rich" are to be "exempted" in order to fit themselves for what to the private soldier will no doubt seem soft berths, morale could be severely damaged.

The colleges would suffer too, not so much from the deferments as from the power to grant them. It would be one more thing — and there are far too many already — to keep students docile. The manner in which the G.I. Bill of Rights shackled those who benefited by it has not been adequately commented on. The payments were almost always controlled by someone who regarded himself as a part of the college administration, and conformity, good

behavior, and reasonably good grades were required. As they should have been, no doubt, but still, it gave the colleges terrific power over the GI's lives. Their wives and children, crowded into Quonset huts or gapping at papa in his cap and gown as he traipsed by to get his diploma, provided good copy for magazine articles and rotogravure pictures. But they were hostages to faculties and administrations such as no previous college generation had even been required to furnish. Veterans who returned to college after the First World War were notoriously obstreperous. They had had enough bullying and heard enough hooey in the army to last them the rest of their lives, and quickly let many an at-first-outraged-but-soon-frightened professor and prexy know that they didn't want any more or it. At Miami University, at Oxford, Ohio, they simply threw an overbearing dean and a couple of his obnoxious satellites off the campus with the promise of a beating if they ever returned, and similar insurrections took place on many other campuses. The colleges had to realize that they were dealing with men, not boys, and once they had swallowed that wholesome fact they were the better for it.

Bergen Evans' column, "The Skeptic's Corner," appeared in the old MERCURY over a period of twenty-five years. He is professor of English at Northwestern University.

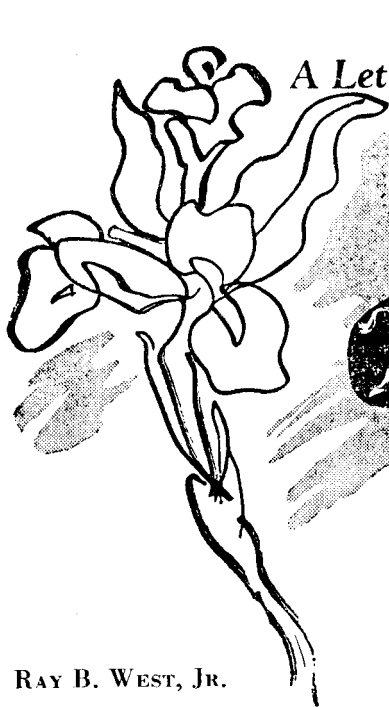
BUT THERE was no such obstreperousness among those who returned from World War II. The colleges had them by their purses, by their wives and children, by the roofs over their heads and the food on their plates. The magazine articles and the presidents' reports and the commencement speakers all said that they were "more mature" and "more in earnest" than students used to be. But those who dealt with them directly sometimes wondered if they weren't simply more docile and cowed. They didn't salute professors and deans, but they kept "Sir" conspicuously in their vocabularies, were gratifyingly deferential, and if they had heterodox opinions, kept them to themselves. Perhaps that is what maturity consists of, but it isn't what a good student consists of. They took ideas very well, but they didn't dish them out, at least not in the professors' hearing. The students of the Twenties saw the professor as a joke. The wild men of the Thirties saw him as an accomplice. But to the subdued men of the late Forties he was an influential friend of the comptroller, to be treated with wary respect.

And the recommendation that deferment be based on academic standing will increase this. Grades are, after all, merely the professor's opinion, and too much weight is already attached to that opinion. Oxford and Cambridge and one or two

American colleges have outside examiners — which means that the grade is someone's opinion of the professor as a teacher as well as of the student as a learner — but very few have any such check on professorial arrogance. Most teachers are gentle men, inclined to be softies, who would probably give everyone an A rather than have to accept the responsibility of deferring some and drafting others, but there are plenty of sadists and bullies who would rejoice at the dreadful power this would confer upon them.

No, it's better for the army to make the choice, to induct what men they need, under the direction and control of the people's representatives, and to send such men as they think are fitted into the colleges for further training. That would avoid making education and deferment a class privilege. And it would avoid the dangerous corollary of making induction into the army a seeming penalty for stupidity.

It would also save the superior young men from being isolated from the experiences of their generation. We need brains in the army as well as in the laboratories. For generations to come, few men will be elected to high political offices in the United States who have not had actual combat experience and among these it is just as well to have some bright ones. We don't want a mandarin class.



A Letter from Iowa:

The Sterile Bull



RAY B. WEST, JR.

IOWA IS VIEWED in the press as one enormous farm—the bread-basket of America, its hills dotted with hog pens like the tents of Civil War battalions. Grant Wood saw Iowa this way, as *American Gothic*, the D.A.R., and a scene from the hill at Stone City. But Grant Wood saw something else, too, something that meant more to him than it means to those collectors who today pay thousands for his paintings: he saw geometric rows of young corn-sprouts, and madness sprouting be-

hind the hard glare of the eyes. Iowa is nature. It is nature and not-nature. A few years ago someone in Iowa paid \$25,000 for a prize bull—it may have been the State College at Ames, and the sum may have been more or less than \$25,000. That is not important. The important thing is that the bull turned out to be sterile.

I am not an Iowan by birth, so my impressions may turn out to be incomplete. One of my grandfathers (my great-great-grandfather) made the last trip of his life from one border of Iowa to the other. In the spring of 1846, with all the other Mormons there, he was forced to leave his home in Nauvoo, Illinois, just across the Mississippi River

from Iowa. He traveled from a point near Keokuk to what became known as Winter Quarters, just across the Missouri River from Council Bluffs, but he and his wife died there the next winter. Another of my grandfathers — several, in fact — made the same journey, but they survived and settled in Utah in 1847. Just a little less than one hundred years later, I reversed that journey, going eastward from Salt Lake City, via Union Pacific, to Cedar Rapids.

It was 104° in the shade that afternoon when my wife, my two young daughters, and I got off the train at Cedar Rapids. "Fine corn growing weather!" I've heard it a thousand times since. The sky was a gray haze, so different from the intense robins' egg blue of the mountain country we had left behind us; the air was filled with the stench of a molasses mill; the soles of our shoes sank into the soft asphalt of the street.

The weather was just about as bad during the first few days, while we were getting settled at Iowa City, just twenty miles south of Cedar Rapids. Each morning as I walked to the University I could see people rolled in blankets sleeping on their front lawns. The golf course, I was told, was dotted each night with sleepers from nearby apartment houses and dormitories. The temperature had climbed to 107°. The humidity had increased. Could we stand this unrelenting

heat? Then a boiling mass of dark clouds rolled across the sky from the southwest.

The storm came suddenly, so suddenly we scarcely had time to get inside — a gust of wind, then large splattering drops of rain. The rain turned to ice, and within five minutes hailstones the size of snowballs were battering our roof. They broke every pane in a florist's greenhouse, roofs were torn open, automobile tops were smashed, fruit was destroyed, and the young corn was battered to the ground. A biting wind followed the hail, and for the next week the thermometer hovered close to freezing.

An exceptional experience? Somewhat. But also typical. Not typical of the weather alone, but of the people and the country.

IOWA is usually thought of as a state with a temperament as level as its landscape. Actually it is a state of extremes. It can produce a Henry Wallace or a Harry Hopkins as easily as it can produce a Herbert Hoover. It almost always votes Republican, but in its fine state hospital they have the nearest thing to socialized medicine in the United States. The majority of its farmers are conservative members of the ultra-conservative Farm Bureau organization, yet in 1932 it was the scene of the "Farm Holiday" strike and of "penny sales," during which farmers banded together, took the

law into their own hands, and gave battle to the large creameries and banks.

Iowa produces the biggest hogs and the tallest corn in the nation, but its university is best known for its training of painters, sculptors, and writers. One weekend in 1941, I went to a cocktail party and found that some of the outstanding writers and artists in America were there: Robert Frost, Robert Penn Warren, Wallace Stegner, Ruth Suckow, Paul Engle, Josephine Johnson, Grant Wood, Fletcher Martin, Emil Ganso. The very next day I made a trip to Mason City, where I heard a dairy husbandryman from the State College at Ames tell a group of farmers: "You can only get out of a cow what you put into her."

As I write this, an investigation is under way in Dubuque which will determine whether or not newsdealers of that city are to be prosecuted for selling copies of books by Erskine Caldwell and John Steinbeck, reproductions of paintings by Velasquez and Titian. When pressed by a group of "prominent club women" to prosecute the newsdealers, County Attorney John Duffy staged a raid on the public library and impounded copies of Fielding's *Tom Jones*, Boccaccio's *Decameron* and an "unnamed" title by Rabelais. Police asked also for a copy of a book by a Dubuque author, Richard Bissell's *A Stretch on the River*,

but discovered that all four library copies were out. Author Bissell commented: "The investigation will do the city of Dubuque no good. Most outsiders think Dubuque kind of a nutty place, anyway." Humbert Albrizzio, noted sculptor and professor of art at the University of Iowa, who was supposed to speak before an art group in Dubuque during the investigation, sent word that he would not appear, because he "could not speak freely about art" in a city where "great art was under attack for obscenity."

Certainly the investigation in Dubuque has followed a familiar pattern. The three ladies who are pressing the charges could be duplicated in almost any city in the country. The difference is that these charges are being brought before a federal grand jury, and that the County Attorney has forced the issue onto the plane of general aesthetics — What is great art? Should it be allowed to circulate freely?

Iowa is known as the farm state, but it is also known as the state where many farmers retire early and move away — mainly to Southern California — to spend the last years of their lives. At the beginning

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of the depression, two-thirds of all Iowa land was being farmed by tenants, controlled by absentee owners. But this was not the kind of absentee ownership found in Oklahoma and other dust-bowl states, where the tenants were dispossessed to make way for machines and large-scale operation. In Oklahoma only a large farm, scientifically run, can make a profit during a period of low farm prices. In Iowa a relatively small farm, managed without too much care, in average times can support a tenant and also provide an adequate income for its displaced owner. The Iowa farmers who retire early and settle in the Long Beach-Los Angeles area are not like the "Okies," they are retired, middle-class, tax-paying citizens.

TAKE THE CASE of Joe Landbauer, a typical Iowa farmer, who, we'll say, farms 200 acres of land near Lone Tree, Iowa. He is a third generation American, whose grandparents came here from Germany in 1882 to escape military service. His father first rented land near Cedar Rapids in 1902, married in 1904, then spent several years as a tenant, moving from farm to farm early each spring. These were difficult years, but by 1910, when Joe was two years old, the family had moved to a small fifty-acre farm for which they had accumulated a down-payment. With the war boom came high prices, so that by the time Joe

was learning to plow and pick corn and feed the hogs, he knew that the land belonged entirely to his father. Already the old four-room shack had been torn down and replaced with a new, seven-room house. By the time he entered high school in 1922, despite the fact that prices had declined somewhat, he could take pride in the neat yard with its white frame house, its silo, wind-mill, and outbuildings; its hogs which won prizes at the State Fair; the few dairy cattle and poultry which were kept mostly for the use of the family; even the Model T Ford which took them each Sunday over four miles of dusty roads to the Lutheran Church services.

By 1926, when Joe graduated from high school, he was already going steady with Marta Kadulka. That was the year his grandfather was so ill with asthma that he had to sell his little shoe-repair shop in Cedar Rapids. Joe's father sent the two old people to California, promising to send them fifty dollars a month for living expenses. Joe spent his first year out of school experimenting with the new hybrid corn, recently developed by Henry A. Wallace and Simon Casady of Des Moines, and trying to figure how to convince Marta's parents that it was all right for her to marry outside the Catholic Church. He looked around for a farm to rent without saying anything to anyone, but during the winter of 1927 his father fell

from the hayloft and broke his leg, so Joe had to stay on at least another year. In the spring he and Marta were married by a priest in Cedar Rapids.

Joe's father's leg healed all right, but from that time on he was troubled more and more by rheumatism. Before Christmas he asked Joe and Marta to take care of things while the rest of the family went to Los Angeles for a month to visit the grandparents. By 1928, Joe's father had made several visits to California, and one day he asked Joe if he didn't want to farm the land by himself. The younger boys could help in the summer and go to school in California in the winter. Joe rented the farm from his father, but he didn't mind so much, knowing it would belong to him someday.

They did well until 1930. The years 1931-35 were tough, and the rent had to be reduced; but farther west and north, particularly in Oklahoma and Kansas, conditions were even worse. Joe disapproved of the Farm Holiday strikes near Sioux City, just as he later disapproved of the program of the A.A.A. In 1936 things were getting a little better, and for the first time he and Marta and their four children drove out to Los Angeles to visit "the folks." He talked with his father about the new machinery he had ordered for spring planting. Mostly, though, he found himself amazed by the California climate. He had never been

out of Iowa before, except once to an F.F.A. meeting in Kansas City. Here was a place where flowers bloomed in December, where it never snowed, where houses needed neither storm windows nor a full supply of winter fuel, where his grandfather (who was now seventy-six) no longer suffered from asthma and seemed likely to live to be a hundred, where his father got rheumatism only once in awhile, and never severely.

That trip in '36 was only the first of many winter trips for Joe. He missed the war years of 1942-1945; although he was "deferred" to farm the land, two of his brothers were drafted, and it was difficult to hire reliable help. He says now that California's not the same as it was in '36 and '37, when he and Marta could rent an apartment in Los Angeles with maid service for thirty-five dollars a month; but he still dreams of the time when he and Marta can go out there for good. They've put a little away, and they might have gone earlier, if his oldest boy hadn't enlisted in the army last winter. The second one is still at Iowa State College at Ames. Besides, Joe feels that forty-three is really just a little early to retire. Yet he knows that he'll get away some day soon. Then he and Marta and the younger children will pile into the 1949 Buick and, as he puts it, "head west."

But the question arises: Why do they want so desperately to get

away? Perhaps many of them don't. The thousands of families who continue to live in Iowa and think of it as home seldom make the news outside the state, while even the California colony, living in an area which is not so much "home" as it is a Chamber of Commerce dream-world, asserts its origins by staging an annual picnic, where they get together and talk about the folks "back home." But the Iowan is not proud of his state as a place to live so much as he is proud of the rich soil, its agricultural wealth, its economic well-being.

FRONTIER LIFE — that period before gold was discovered in California, when Eastern Iowa villages were almost the last outposts of civilization — was apparently more colorful than the life of the present. In those days, steamboats ran up the Missouri River to Sioux City and up the Mississippi to Keokuk, Muscatine, Davenport, Clinton, and Dubuque. As a matter of fact, the Mississippi River towns are still the liveliest in Iowa, possessing a faded and picturesque beauty belonging more to the past than the present.

Most Iowans today do not enjoy the comforts and conveniences of the more urban states, but neither do they have the hardships of rural life known in some other sections. Yet despite a kind of dead-level of culture and topography, one senses something seething below the sta-

tistics, a force akin to the weather, a natural force which may erupt like a volcano, erratically, and unpredictably, producing a statesman or a demagogue, a madman or a genius. Grant Wood caught this in the haunting gleam of fanaticism behind the placid exterior of his Iowa farmer in "American Gothic." Lacking both the normal outlets of frontier society and the forms of a society with a more central culture, the passionate intensity of the native Iowan can be relieved only by trivial amusements or by dreams of escape. When — and if — the dreams are frustrated, violence is likely to be the result.

One evening last winter a student at the University of Iowa called for his girl to take her to a Christmas party at his fraternity house. A little after midnight, clad in tuxedo trousers and bare from the waist up, he was discovered pounding on the door of the Iowa City police station. "Come quickly," he said. "Gi-Gi's in trouble." Gi-Gi was the girl. She was dead in a rooming house a few blocks away.

The details of the "Bednasek Murder" are well-known — at least so far as they ever can be known. "Benny" Bednasek was acquitted, so we must assume his innocence of murder. But the events of the evening when Gi-Gi Jackson died were what caused a sensation-loving press to give the story such a big play.

Benny and the girl to whom he

had recently become engaged had dinner by candlelight in formal dress, with cocktails and lobster, all this in the makeshift atmosphere of a student rooming-house ironically named "The Empty Arms." They dined, then took a cab to the dance. The party lasted until midnight; then they returned to the rooming house for what Benny called in his testimony "a nightcap." They had a drink each from a bottle of scotch whiskey, then put a record on the phonograph, pushed the table (still littered with dirty dishes) against the wall, and began to dance again. Benny had, by this time, apparently removed his coat, waistcoat, and shirt. While they were dancing, Gi-Gi playfully put her fingers to Benny's throat, pretending to choke him. "No, no," he is reported to have said; "That's not the way you do it. You do it this way."

At this point Benny claims to have "blacked out." The next thing he knew, Gi-Gi was on the floor, unconscious. He carried her to a nearby bed and tried to revive her by artificial respiration. It had no effect, so he ran to a firehouse a few blocks away, hoping for assistance. The firehouse was next door to the police station, and this is where the police entered the case. They located a doctor and got him to Benny's room, but by this time Gi-Gi was dead.

I do not wish to suggest that such violence is really representative of

Iowa life. Had the events occurred on Park Avenue or Sunset Boulevard, they would have aroused little more than routine interest. Happening as they did, in the Iowa setting, they provided that touch of macabre parody which caught the national fancy. Benny Bednasek, with his dreams of a life better than that provided by "The Empty Arms," is cut from the same cloth as Grant Wood's farmers and those Iowans who feel the need to migrate to Southern California.

AGRICULTURAL experts tell us that if everyone should move from the State of Iowa, it would take only a few generations for the lush, geometric foliage to disappear, for the green landscape is man-made. Iowa was drab and treeless in frontier days; except for the river valleys; there was nothing but barren prairie. If not for replanting, the hot summers and cold winters would kill most of the trees and shrubbery in time. Perhaps this is true of human beings as well. Perhaps there is a real need for many of the young to get away after spending their first seventeen or eighteen years battling the vicissitudes of living on an Iowa farm. Perhaps this is why so many Iowa farmers dream of California or Arizona or Florida, and why so many eventually go to these places.

The result, however, makes living in Iowa, for native Iowans, even

more difficult than it might be otherwise. For too many are tied to a dream outside Iowa, and not to the reality of living within the borders of their own state. Consequently, there is no central city with the character of Denver, San Francisco, or even Kansas City, and there isn't the kind of cultural life that one finds in most other states. Iowa is in the center of what H. L. Mencken liked to call "The Bible Belt," but it is a country of churches, rather than religion. One feels that rural Iowans — and they are, of course, the great majority — attach more value to their lodges, the Elks, Moose, Eagles, Redmen, and Odd Fellows, than they do to their religious sects. The Lodge Hall on Saturday night offers almost the only release from what seems to be essentially a state of ennui and spiritual privation, endured for the sake of that dream of secular paradise — Long Beach, California.

I mentioned at the outset that I am not a native Iowan. I still think of Utah specifically, and the Far West in general, as my "home" — and so do my children. I feel that I belong to the people and the culture of the Far West, and even to the mountains, the sagebrush, and the desert. Yet I cannot do my best work in Utah. My job — which is teaching and writing — cuts too close to prejudices and concepts with which, when I am at home in Utah, I become too intimately in-

olved.

I grew up believing that everyone hated the Mormons. My grandparents had suffered from persecution in Ohio, Missouri, and Illinois. The only hint of prejudice I have come across here was soon after I arrived in Iowa City, when our landlady who had moved to Iowa from Missouri, complained that we were using too much water, and added: "You're Mormons? Huh, my father used to shoot Mormons."

But for those who come to Iowa from elsewhere, and are not directly dependent upon the weather to earn a living, Iowa has many advantages. If one has a job to do, he is allowed to do it — even encouraged. A stronger regional awareness, such as one finds in most Southern states, begets cultural prejudices which, though colorful in themselves, are usually distracting to the outsider, who always remains one. For the native of Iowa, too many things are lacking, too much is present. Joe Landbauer, when you meet him a few years from now in Los Angeles, will tell you that Iowa is the finest state in the land. He will be telling you the truth as he sees it. Wasn't it the rich, corn-growing land of Iowa which made it possible for him to get away from the unbearable winters, the hot, humid "corn-growing weather" of its summers? He will say that he loves Iowa, but he is not going back there.

CHICK," SHE SAID, looking hard at his closed eyes as if he could see her.

He answered something that sounded like "Hog," his head rolling away from her. Still sleeping, he made himself comfortable by sticking his enormous rear over into her part of the seat.

"Okay," she said, "you jus go on an sleep. I'm going up in the club car and get me a drink."

She got up, stepped over his legs, and walked up the aisle. At the door

noting too that there was one chair but only one between her and the redheaded fellow. She gave him a long look, then the instant he returned it, swept her eyes away to the corner where the other man was sitting. That one was all bulges and sweat — smoking a cigar like Chick always did and reading the *Journal-American*. She wanted to run her eyes back down the length of the car to the Negro barman and the well-padded gal he was sitting next to, but she restrained herself. She knew they were watching her, hitting her with their eyes, then saying something, then hitting her with their eyes again. She let her fox jacket (it was getting kind of sick-looking at the cuffs — this spring was the end) fall back off her hunched shoulders. Out of her peeling red leather bag she brought a cigarette — one that had slipped from the pack and gotten a little crushed among her compact, comb and letters.

"Thank you," she said as she saw the lighted match coming toward her. Her neighbor said, "Wait a minute, we missed it," as the match went out; he struck another. Her thin upper lip slid over her teeth into her so-nice-of-you-to-applaud smile. One tooth on the left, hidden unless she smiled all-out like this, was gold, the payoff in a smile that was like a badge shown briefly: she didn't want him or anybody else to think she was trying to start a con-

PASSING STAR

A STORY

ROBERT LOWRY

she stopped and looked back down the car at him, batting her mascaraed eyelashes several times before pivoting on her high left heel and pulling at the doorhandle. Let him snore away there if he wants to, she thought as she crossed the grinding intersection of the cars. Anybody put as much away as him before we got on *ought* to sleep it off.

The club car was practically empty. She selected a seat halfway down, careful to take the chair with the standing ashtray beside it, and

versation or something because she didn't *have* to start no conversations.

"Did you get on at Penn Station too?" he asked.

She raised the penciled lines she replaced her shaved eyebrows with and glanced suspiciously at him. "That's right," she said. Unexpectedly she yawned, forgetting that she ought to cover it with her hand.

"Too early to get tired," he said. "I mean, if you're going all the way to Cincinnati."

"That's where I'm goin'." She noticed that his eyes had darted suddenly to the corner where the barman and his buxom girl friend were still shooting sly glances this way, and panic rising in her chest made her say something quick to draw his attention back: "But trains don't bother me much. I guess I ought to be used to them by now."

"You travel a lot?"

She didn't know why his question brought him into focus for the first time. He looked pretty regular — redheaded, with a thin, high-cheekboned face and some very dim freckles across a nose that was too short. She liked his eyes, that was it, even though they did make her uncomfortable. He was dressed kind of sloppy — gray sports jacket, wrinkled gray wool trousers, and gum-soled shoes that could stand a shine. She answered: "I'm always travelin'. That's my business."

"You mean traveling is *part* of your business?" he asked. "Or you

mean it's none of *my* business?"

"I'm an artist." She squinted her eyes and showed him the back of her head — feeling that kind of tightness there at the hairline on her forehead. It had been just to tell somebody this that she'd left Chick to his snoring and come up to the club car. *I'm an artist.*

"How about a drink?"

She turned back to him and saw that he'd motioned the barman over. The barman had an extra big grin on his shiny dark face — not only the four-inch one the Pennsylvania Railroad required of him, but a dividend of his own that she felt was meant for her.

"I drink scotch and soda," she said.

"Make that one bourbon-and-soda and one scotch-and-soda." He looked steadily at her after the barman went away. She saw the barman's girl friend smile as the barman went by her and into the bar alcove. "What kind of an artist do you mean?" the man asked. "Painter?"

"No," she said, and felt her forehead tighten again. "Musician."

"Yeah?" His eyes dropped momentarily to the soiled low-cut dress she was wearing. Hell, he didn't expect her to wear something good to sit up all night on the train, did he? "Classical stuff, you mean? Or popular?"

"I do classical," she said defensively. Then added: "But I sing

popular for a livin." She eyed him hard and direct for a minute, squinting a little, before she said, "I'm Kit-Kat Williams."

Those speckled, interested green eyes set wide apart in his bony face showed no recognition whatever. "My name is Jack Gibbons."

WHAT WAS he trying to pull? She reached into her bag and brought out a little wallet. Opening it, she saw her name typed out under the shiny cellophane of the identification tag. "You don't believe I'm Kit-Kat Williams, do you? Well, there it is, you can see for yourself."

He reached across the empty chair between them and held the wallet long enough to read the name Catherine "Kit-Kat" Williams. "I'm not very much up on musical things," he said. "I guess I ought to recognize your name, but I don't."

"Well, that's no skin off my nose." She snapped the bag shut on her wallet and put it on the chair between them — just so he wouldn't try to move over. Then to avoid him she tilted up her head to look at the operation the barman was performing in front of them — taking the caps off the miniature bottles of whiskey and pouring the contents into their glasses. The barman wasn't pulling any of his funny business now that he was standing so close to her, or she'd have put him in his place good and proper. But his woman was staring over.

It was the act of paying that made her relent toward Jack Gibbons a little — after all he *was* laying out a buck more than he'd have had to otherwise. But he spoiled all her better feelings immediately by saying, "Are you a blues singer like Billie Holliday?"

Could he tell? Did that mean he could tell? The barman was keeping his eyes to himself, but she knew he'd heard the question and was liking it. She watched his dark-skinned hand pick up the change Jack Gibbons had left in the silver saucer; she watched his back retreating up the aisle toward his girl friend.

"Billie Holliday!" she said. "I'm not in that class, thank you!"

"What's the matter with Billie Holliday?" He drank. "I've got two of her albums — I think she's really good."

So she switched her prejudice. "I jus don't like her style of singing," she said, and punched out her cigarette in the big ashtray by her knee. "Did you ever hear a song called *Moanin' Baby*?"

"You mean by Billie Holliday?"

"Billie Holliday!" She squinted her eyes and looked away up the car angrily. "It's *my* song — I wrote it, words and music both. It was on the Hit Parade in 1939. You know how I come to name it *Moanin' Baby*?"

"No," he said, "I never even heard —"

"I was in Paris playin at the Boeuf

Sur Le Toit and Ben Hecht came in one night, so I had this tune in my head and I didn't have any words yet. So I sat at his table and hummed this tune for him and asked him if he could suggest any words for a title or somethin'. He thought a minute and suggested *Moanin' Baby*, and that's what I called it. It was on the Hit Parade in 1939."

"I guess I missed it," Jack Gibbons said. "Matter of fact, I only got interested in jazz lately. What's your style of singing?"

"My own," Kit-Kat said. "I do everything the way it comes natural to me."

"I guess that's the best way. . . . You play your own accompaniment?"

"I'm an all-round entertainer," Kit-Kat said. "I can sing with a band or I can play my own piano." She thought a moment before she added a little hopefully, "I bet you don't even know who Ben Hecht is, do you?"

"Sure — he's an author. I've read some of his stuff."

"Yeah?" She looked away, let the silence drag out some. Finally she turned and asked, "You don't know anything about Cincinnati, do you?"

At that moment she heard the barman and his girl bust out in giggles, but she didn't take her eyes from his.

"I ought to," Jack said. "I was born and raised there."

She'd go down there and scratch

out a couple of nigger eyes if she thought that bitch was laughing about her. "I was jus wonderin if you could inform me about a place called The Little Rooster. That's where I'm booked to play."

"The Little Rooster," Jack said. "I've been there a couple times — before the war. If it's the one I'm thinking of out on Reading Road."

"What kind of a place is it?"

"Small," he said, and she felt herself blink. "It's a nice enough place. You know — a cocktail lounge. They didn't have any entertainment the couple times I was there. Just a juke box."

She shook her glass, made the ice clinkle. "I don't know what I'm gettin into this trip. Al's Chicago office booked it, so he couldn't tell me anything about it. All I know is I got confirmation. I don't go on any trip like this less I get confirmation?"

"Who's Al?"

"My agent — Al Klein. You ought to know *him*, he's one of the biggest theatrical agents in the country. When he says do something, I do it." The car began to rock drunkenly on a rough piece of track. "I had enough of agents before I got him; now I'm satisfied. You know I don't even have to pay for my ticket? He's got an account with the Pennsylvania Railroad — *every* railroad. So all I got to do is ask for my ticket and tell them to put it on his account. How do you like that?"

She thought his not answering showed scepticism, so she added, "Course he's supposed to hand me the bill for it at the end of the year. Only sometimes he forgets part of it. How do you like that?"

"Must be a pretty generous guy," he mumbled, and drank up.

"That's what he is, a *real* generous guy." The neck of her dress had slipped down to expose the top of her brassiere; she pulled it up. "He says this is going to be my big year. Columbia told him they might re-issue both my albums again this summer. And Capitol keeps callin him up trying to sign me. Only he says we got plenty of time to be particular."

"How about another drink?" Jack asked.

"I still got some." But she thought: I'll show that black number down there which one of us is gettin the drinks bought, and added quickly: "On the other hand, I guess I'll be needin one by the time he brings them."

THE BARMAN got up out of this comfortable seat in the corner when he saw Jack's two up-pointed fingers. After the drinks had come, Kit-Kat said, "What are you in?"

"What?"

"What do you do for a livin'?"

"For a living," he said, "I go to school."

She stared hard at him. Was he trying to make fun of somebody?

"I don't get it," she said. "If you think —"

"I'm going to art school on the G. I. Bill of Rights. Ninety bucks a month — so I call it going to school for a living."

"You a painter then?"

"Yeah. I hope so."

She considered him, squinting. Didn't look like no painter to her. She wondered maybe he was trying to say he was a painter because she'd proved who she was. Kit-Kat Williams. An artist. So now he got the idea to be an artist too. More likely a clerk or something like that.

"You were a soldier then, I guess," she said.

"Almost four years."

"You been abroad — Paris or London?"

"Both."

"I been in both too. *Before* the war. I played the Boeuf Sur Le Toit in Paris — you ever hear of that? The Ivy Club in London."

"I heard Josephine Baker in Africa," he said. "You know her?"

"How would I know anybody like that?" she demanded indignantly. A quick glance at the barman and his girl showed her they weren't paying attention. "Matter of fact I do know her slightly — professionally, I mean. One night at the Boeuf she came in to catch my act and thought she was pretty smart — talked all the way through it. You know what I did? I stopped right in the middle of a song and stood up and told her

to get out since she couldn't keep quiet. How do you like that?"

"Did she get out?"

"Sure she got out. I just stood there — what else could she do? Her and her friends both. I don't have to take anything like that from her kind." Her voice had grown shrill; now she added more calmly: "She can't sing anyhow. She's through."

"I thought she was pretty good," Jack said.

"She's through," Kit-Kat Williams said. "She was through years ago. She never did have a voice."

"I'd like to hear you," he said. "When are you starting at The Little Rooster?"

"Tonight."

"Tonight? How are you going to do that when you're on the train? Oh, you mean because it's after twelve." He glanced at his wrist-watch. "But it's only eleven-thirty."

"Okay then, tomorrow night." She liked to catch people on that gag when it was after midnight. "Sure thing, you come over and catch my act. I don't know anything about when I go on, but you'll find it in the paper. They *better* put it in the paper."

"Anyhow I can call up," he said. "Maybe we could have a drink together after you're through."

"May-be," she said, and gave him her profile, the way people in Paris did. "Then when you come back to New York you can see me at the

Polkadot Club. You know where that is? Fulton Street in Brooklyn."

"I'll look it up," he said.

She wrinkled her forehead and put on a tight, amused face for him. "You thought I was kiddin when I said I was Kit-Kat Williams, didn't you? Maybe you still think I'm kiddin."

"Oh no," he said. But he seemed a little uncomfortable, downing his drink. A big white man like him uncomfortable! And trying to tie her up with people like Holliday and Josephine Baker! She guessed she'd straightened him out on that subject; she could always work the trick when she wanted to. Two things gave her a big bitter thrill: telling people her name, Kit-Kat Williams, and letting them know which side of the line she was on.

"If you're from Cincinnati," she said, reaching into her bag for a cigarette and waiting for his light, "maybe you heard me when I got my start. I started singing on WFBE — it was called then. Now it's WCPO. Didn't you ever hear me?"

"I probably did, I don't remember. But then your home's in Cincinnati too, isn't it?"

"My home's in Norwood — or used to be. My mother moved up to New York a long, long time ago when I first got popular, and I haven't been back in over ten years. I don't know anybody there. You

know what I mean? I keep strickly to myself."

"How come you don't know The Little Rooster then, if you're from Norwood?"

She hesitated, sensing that the answer was the give-away; and while she did, a funny look came on his face. He knew! The bastard was guessing something! She answered quick: "Look, you don't think my mother was letting me go round to night clubs when I was only thirteen, do you? That's when I started singing on the radio — thirteen years old."

"Pretty young," he said, and was going to say something else when the conductor came in. This was a new conductor. Must have got on at that last stop, Altoona. He took a seat two chairs away from the fat man on the other side, glanced at Kit-Kat and her companion, then began checking over his tickets. But he didn't ask for anybody's ticket receipts; he'd probably seen them stuck in the seats.

WASN'T HE awful young for a conductor? The one out of New York had been old as Methuselah. Now he looked at her again, giving her the old eye. Lady-killing white man sizing her up; heavy lips and wicked around the eyes. But there was one answer he wasn't getting, she could tell that.

"Could you inform me what time we get into Cincinnati?"

He cracked his face in a smile, as if he thought she was joking. His eyes on their way down to look at the watch he took from his vest pocket brushed over her skinny legs. "We're twenty minutes late now," he said, "but you'll probably make up the time out of Pittsburgh and get there on schedule. Eight-thirty."

"Train time or their time?"

"Train time," he said. "I don't know anything about their time."

"Is train time the same as Cincinnati time?" she asked Jack Gibbons.

"I haven't been back there in three years," he said. "I seem to remember something about Day-light Savings."

"You're pretty much in a hurry to get there, aren't you?" the conductor asked. He was trying to be cute — staring at her low neck. She knew where she'd stand with him if he weren't on duty. Maybe even if he was. She felt a cold trill of laughter run all through her — the same funny feeling she'd had playing for the first time before a big white audience with the spotlight on her. Like a cruel joke or something. But not on her.

"No, I'm very comfortable in your train," she answered. "Long as I can sit here in the club car. Is it open all night?"

"He goes to bed around twelve," the conductor said, indicating the negro barman with his thumb.

"That means there won't be any more drinks, but you can sit here as long as you want. Somebody might take your seat at Pittsburgh if you don't watch out."

"I ain't worried —" She checked herself for fear he'd ask why.

"Well, you can sit here and talk to me then," the conductor said. "I'll point out the spots of interest."

His manner was so fresh — he didn't seem to care if he *was* on duty.

"You stay on all the way to Cincinnati?" she asked.

"No. I'm through at Pittsburgh. About three hours from now."

"I wish I had a job like that," she said, feeling somehow compelled to force the conversation. "Just take a little ride on the train and that's that."

"Yeah? What do you do?"

She felt the kind of tightness at her hairline. "I'm an artist," she said.

"Yeah?" His eyes went from hers to Jack Gibbons' and back to hers again. She felt he'd done that to see whether Jack Gibbons was her escort or just somebody on the same train; he ought to be able to tell by the vacant chair between them. "Well, I'm an artist too." He gave Jack Gibbons his cracked smile. "I painted my house last week!"

"Anybody want any more drinks," the barman said, "I'm closin up the bar."

"How about it?" Jack Gibbons

asked.

"No, thank you," she said. "I got most of my glass here."

The fat man up in the corner raised his head from his newspaper as if brought back from a long way off. Then he folded the paper neatly, struggled up to a standing position, dusted something off his right pants leg with a fat flipper of a hand, and lumbered out of the car — leaving just the five of them. The barman was wiping off a glass while his girl friend stared soberly out the window opposite her, out into the night. She sat like that until he was almost finished with his duties. Then she stood up, pulled her dress down out of the crease under the bulge of her belly, and yawned elaborately. Giving the barman a big personality smile, she went up the aisle and out of the car. After a few more useless wipes with his cloth, he folded it, placed it neatly on a shelf under the bar, and followed her. The train lurched as he reached the short corridor that led to the door.

"G'night, everybody," he said, opening the door.

He got silence for an answer. The door closed.

"I guess him and Aunt Jemima are fixing to make some pancakes tonight," the conductor said, looking at Jack.

Kit-Kat heard herself laugh — high and hysterical, almost like a scream. Jack Gibbons looked at her. The conductor looked at her. She

started to reach into her bag for a cigarette but stopped herself. Had to get out of here, all the excitement had worn off and she was starting to act funny. Would Chick be awake? He could sleep for ten hours solid after he'd hung one on. Her "manager." "Mistuh Chick, my manager." Sure he was her "manager": didn't he manage to spend every penny she picked up on these lousy little two-week dates she was getting since the war? She'd never get rid of him less she bought him off. Please God, she thought suddenly, let Capitol Records sign me for a new album. Please God, let Al Klein have the contract all set for me when I get back in two weeks. Let him get me my old spot at Café Society too . . . the Blue Angel. . . . And let me get rid of Chick.

She'd been thinking so hard she must have missed Jack Gibbons' reply. But glancing at him she realized he hadn't answered — the conductor had been left in silence after his little remark. She started to feel grateful, then checked herself. Because of me! she thought. That's why the son of a bitch didn't answer, because of me!

She stood up. "Guess I'll go on back and get some rest." Their eyes were square on her. "Eight-thirty can't come around any too soon to suit me." She hated them both. Hated Jack Gibbons most, because he knew. "Goodnight."

"Goodnight," Jack Gibbons said. The conductor was looking at her. He smiled.

She was almost to the door, when it opened and there was Chick. His shirt-tail was half out, his bloated face was like a fat stewed prune. She opened her mouth to say something when the conductor spoke behind her.

"The bar's closed," the conductor said.

"I came for my wife," Chick said thickly, not taking his eyes from hers. "I'm not interested in no bar."

"Your *wife*?" the conductor said. She heard him stand up. "This woman your *wife*?"

She'd fooled *him*! She'd fooled *him* good and proper! She might not have fooled Jack Gibbons, but she'd fooled that conductor all right! Her nostrils strained big, her throat tensed.

"Come on, let's get out of here," Chick said, paying no attention to the conductor. Nasty with sleep and drink — he had her by the wrist and was pulling her along the short corridor that led to the door.

"His wife!" she could hear the conductor saying to Jack Gibbons.

She wanted to hear Jack Gibbons' answer, but the door closed on his first word. As they went through the darkened car and dropped safely into their seats, an hysterical elation lifted her from the depths to which she'd fallen, and all the tightness in her forehead was gone.

Cucking with Gas

or, Sportsmen, Arise!

DR. PUTZI SZCZERBOWSKI, LL.D.M.

What we need is a new slant, a new reaction to all this, we told ourselves last month, waving our arm out over the American scene. We can't see the trees for the ~~unbark~~. So we decided to send our visiting culture critic, Dr. Szczerbowski (famous for his critique of Miss Truman's Voice, Feb. '50) out to cover the sports show at Grand Central Palace in New York City. This is what he came back with.

EVER SINCE MY adolescent days at my *Hochschule* in Berlin, the picture of the "sporting" American has remained with me. The healthy, enviable, extrovert Yankee, in his generously-cut knickerbockers, torn sweater and pearl-gray derby, who devotes himself to the sulky, or better, the horse race with the highest *Idealismus* — the way a writer devotes himself to bookmaking — forgetting family and home and all the problems of the hearthside in the

pursuit of his pastime and the enchanted hours among his companions in the sporting-house . . . this man will always have more meaning for me than even Calvin Coolidge of whom I used to cherish a woodcut-likeness on the wall of my *Gymnasium*, right next to a pair of boxing-gloves which unfortunately I never had the opportunity to use.

I see I have just written a typically German sentence. In German the action so often comes at the end, and to me that is not only bad, it is ridiculous. I must write like an American, for it is in spite of my being here no longer than six months that I American am, since my mother was the only fool-bludded Shawnee in Saxony, having left a touring Medical Show to marry my father and it is from her that I inherit my American citizenship as well as my taste for cigars, my right to the title Princess

Tempest-in-the-Tepee, and according to my father's cousin, Moritz, half the state of Oklahoma and a play by the same name.

But to the point: time is money and I am no longer in the land of the cuckoo-clock. American sportsmanship I have always loved! — from afar, of course. As a child I was trained as a boy-scout or *Pfadfinder* as the Germans call them in honor of your great American novelist, James Fenimore Cooper, who coined the international scout motto, "*Ohne Mich*," (my American friends tell me the original is "Be Prepared," but this I do not understand and it cannot be!). Always I have admired the American sense of fair-play, the love of the game for its own sake, without any selfish consideration for who wins or who loses, who is on top or who is on bottom — is that not the whole principal of your national passion for laying odds?

How I have respected, from afar of course, the concept of never hitting a man when he is down, the inherent justice of disqualifying the "foul," and the selfless, Platonic nobility which is an instinct in even the commonest man to sacrifice everything to "being on the square." It was a lesson my Indian mother never tired of rubbing in to me. "America is the land of fair-play," she would say with a faraway look in her eyes, and then add quite irrelevantly, "I wonder what it would feel like to own something like Oklahoma?"

You will therefore be able to picture something of my delight when my good friend Horace Hangmore called on me last Thursday to ask me to launch National Brotherhood Week by attending the Sportsmanship and Vacation Exploitation at your Grand Central Palace. My heart sang within me. What a blessing it is, I told myself for the hundredth time, to be in this wonderful country, the land of the brave and the home of the free! This would be my opportunity not only to visit a typical American palace, but to observe the living embodiment of the famed "sporting-spirit," to witness basketball and football games, prize-fights, cow-punching, wrestling, croquet and log-rolling, lacrosse, polo and canasta, and to learn the rules and regulations of "The Fix" which we did not play when I was a *Bursch-leaguer* at Humboldt U., and about which I am most curious.

I can no longer say what I expected the Exploitation to be like. I had already attended your Radio City Music Hall, and my enthusiasm for American showmanship, just as for sportsmanship, knew no bounds. There will be courts and diamonds, I thought, and a veritable wilderness for bird-hunting, a golf course, boxing arenas, hockey fields, picnic grounds, a county jail; in short, everything the mature American *Pfadfinder* might require to stimulate his instinct for sport and his contempt for profit. And all this,

not only indoors, but in a palace! I hastily strapped a rucksack to my shoulders — I was already in my *Lederhosen* — and jumped into a taxi, explaining my destination to the driver, a bookish young man who seemed unwilling to share my exaltation.

WE DREW UP before a curious edifice, blazing with electric lights although it was only midday. Ach America, I amused to myself, how prodigious! Even to the point of ignoring Nature and the Sun, here at the very home and nest of the Sport! The *Baukunst*, I will look at later, when I emerge. I paid my admission and walked through the glass doors into the auditorium. Inside all was darkness. Again, I amused to myself. What a paradox! To illuminate artificially the daylight outside, and inside to be as black as "Achi Chernya!" Presently I began to feel my way — I had received one or two rabbit punches and an *entsetzlich* kick in the groins while trying to find my eyes so that I could announce my part in the National Brotherhood Week — but when an invisible hand struck me across the face with a lollypop, I lost courage and beat a retreat down a dim passageway, pursued all the time by a voice, amplified beyond endurance, like the Fuehrer's in the old Berliner Sportpalast.

It was that terrifying noise with its inhuman range from baritone to

macaw-soprano that effected my orientation. I had evidently taken refuge in the Smoking Room of what was a theatre of the phonocinematograph! Ach, that *Esel* of a cab-driver! He had ignored my instructions entirely, or perhaps not even heard them. At last I must telephone with my good friend Horace Hangmore who reassures me at once and sends his own *auto-wagen* to lead me to the real Palast.

How can I find words to describe this wonderful experience without using a foreign language! German has none of the restraint of the English which I use so badly and the which I learned at home from a lexicon and your great poet Gottfried Chaucer whose *Canterbury Erzählungen* I translated in Leipzig in 1921. German is the language of hyperbole and of the emotion which sweeps one away. And how swept away I was that morning! I stood for an eternity in dumb admiration of merely the facade of the Grand Central Palast. The rhythmic spacing of the colonnades — like counterpoint in a fugue; the turrets with their daring Mohammedan motif; the inspired use, between stories, of battlements with such undulating machiolations; and most of all, the colossal statue of *Atlas Supporting a Bird Cage* which stands in the forecourt, and the which (I have been informed by Mr. Hangmore's very *gemütlich* chauffeur, Buster) was originally a gift from the French Republic to

the United States in the name of Liberty. How to find words for it all, when the only thing that comes to mind is: *nicht wahr!* What superman conceived this fantasy? What race of giants immortalized it in stone? What was the glory of Potsdam, the abandon of Sans Souci, the *grandezza* of the Schloss-Insul compared to it!

I hesitated to go in, after that awe-stricken hour of contemplation on the street. Even the greatest show on earth would be a disappointment after that staggering facade! And yet — but you have guessed it — I was never less disappointed in my life! Entering the vast marble hall and climbing the vast marble staircase I was greeted by a deep, an overwhelming silence — a masterwork of dramatic timing to sustain the mood of reverence in the visitor before he gives himself up to pure sport. I looked around me to shake a tear of emotion from my eye, and to see how the others were taking it. But there was nobody else in the vast marble hall with its vast marble staircase. What superb planning! Here, as in a cathedral, there was no need to check the emotions. *Gefühl*, as we say, was on the *Haus*, and one could be swept away without being noticed. I knelt on the steps, untied my rucksack and refreshed myself with a delicious wedge of Tilsit cheese and a mouthful of ladyfingers. Then I coughed up one dollar and fifty and entered the Exploitation.

Again the mark of the master, the essence of the sport, as infallible and unexpected as a *blitz* of lightning! Where else in the world, I amused to myself for perhaps the tenth time, would one find such modesty, such simplicity in contrast to an idea as grandiose! What sultan's fakir wearing himself out with the rubbing of his Aladdin's lamp could make it come off with more magic! The very fantasy of putting a Palast into the masquerade of a deserted departmental store. Here are no cheering multitudes, no flowers, no baskets nor champions nor racing stables.

I PROMENADE myself slowly from counter to booth and from booth to counter. Unbelieving are my eyes: Fishing Tackle, Spinning Tackle; Lures, Spinning Lures; Sioux Moccasins, Rain Beau Fishing Lines; Sterno Stoves, Jiffy Folding Tables; Huskies Footwear, Kleppers Folding Boats; Raincoats and Sporting Goods, Wildlife Paintings; Stickle-back Drill Saws, Cam-o-flage Bait Lines; Flies and Hooks, Nylon Landing Nets! What a paean in praise of Sportsmanship and Brotherhood our great Walt Whitman would have made of all this. Already the beating syllables are forming in my mind in German. I pause for a moment to shake off my emotion and recollect myself. I perceive, *vis à vis*, a scene so *landschaftlich*, here in the midst of the Palast that I doubt I am yet at my senses. *Einz*,

Zwei, Drei, I approach. *Fabelhaft*, for I am no longer in a departmental store but in some simple corner of the Bavarian countryside, remote from the corruption and strain of modern life. Here is a little glass lake with wooden ducks. There a pebble-covered path winding, through something like grass, to the door of a caravan. It is romantic-looking this caravan, as if built for gypsies in some novel by our great Jules Verne. A placard by the entrance proclaims: "Welcome. Inspect the New Buick Trailer."

I march boldly in. I am amazed by the luxury of the interior. It has been divided into a little Louis Quinze *wohnung*. The foyer is paneled with Bouchers and filled with petit-point treasures which must be part of the original *meubles* of the Palast itself. I push aside a delightful Chinese screen, and I am in the salon. Before I have an opportunity to admire the decor, I realize I have trespassed into a private *Landbesitz*. For the salon is occupied by three gentlemen and a former show-girl. They are all sitting together around a *boule* table, and two of the gentlemen appear young enough to be students. They look somewhat like football players, and yet, perhaps not, because they are so tall and lean. The third man is at least old enough to be married to the former show-girl, and although she is not the students' mother, he may be their father. As I draw near, it seems

to me he talks to them like a Dutch uncle.

"Arite, fellers. Yer got id straight? Just don throw it. Muff it er coupler times. An jest dribble. Yer know like in Minniesoda. Whoze gunner no der diffrinz? Y'aint hoyden nobody. So der fans think yer lost. Who cares! that aint no skin awf yaw nozes. Yew know yer winnin! Yew git the cabbetch, they git disirpoyntit." He has enough money at his elbow to impress a Wiesbaden *croupier*. The young men look inspired.

"We dig it, Salve," remarks the first. "We don't need a blueprint."

"Green-prints is what I need," observes the second. "Make with the kale." He eyes the money on the table like a greedy child, and then, looking up, notices me. For some reason his expression changes. "Whose the dummy in the doorway? Another one of your stooges?"

They all turn to stare at me. Before I can make apology for my intrusion, the former show-girl remarks, "Aw! What's wrong with you kids? Can't you see he's just one of the squares running the show here. He's a Sportsman! You'll be afraid of the cops next. Right, Solly?"

I LOOK POLITELY away, and notice through a window the size of an opening in an oubliette, the exhibit in Stall 278. The Encyclopedia Britannica. *Fabelhaft!* Now I shall have

my questions answered. I slip out of the caravan unnoticed, and cross a miniature golf course to Stall 278.

The young lady behind the counter is charming. She is a concert pianist between engagements and soon we are chattering like wild all over the keyboard. I offer to guide her through the trailer, but she is adamant and cannot leave her post. With a sigh, I, too, return to my mission.

Where, does the Fraulein know, can I learn something about "The Fix"? She is confounded by my erudition, my knowledge of obscure American folklore. She consults a printed program. No, there is neither nor basketball nor neither wrestling. But have I taken in the Fish Hatcheries in Stalls 215E & F? Then her eyes light up: "A good way to inspect the entire exposition," she reads aloud, "is to cover the First floor, then take elevator to Third floor, circle it and then proceed to Second floor."

I thank her profusely, but she tells me to act at once upon her information. And, indeed, with my mission still to be completed, I have little time for gallantry, I reflect as I sadly climb to the Third floor. But here at last, there is life: beautiful trout-fish swimming in a Model D-29 folding, rubber pool! And

standing in an admiring throng around the water, holding long, dangerous-looking instruments in their hands, are the inmates of various institutions for the criminally insane and the juvenile delinquent who have apparently been given temporary shelter in the Palast by the Government. What better springboard can I find for launching National Brotherhood Week? What nobler theme? I step boldly onto a *planche* skilfully overhanging the water; I am so inspired that I forget all about my broken English and break into German. There is a rapt, a deep silence as in the marble hall downstairs. Even when I am finished the silence continues for a moment. In my speech I have been stimulated by our great Walt Whitman, but I have remembered to conclude in English with the words Sportsmanship and National Brotherhood.

Not an eye is dry in the audience. Then suddenly someone cries out, "Hey guys, it's Rondeau, the Hermit! Let him have it!" And I am subjected to a demonstration the which few have experienced since the days of the cucking stool. I am still too shaken to describe it. I can only say, modestly and dryly, that more than ever I was swept away. At least, I did my duty and covered more than the First floor.

Soviet Espionage:

Part III

The Case of The Nervous Spy

JULIEN STEINBERG

ON FEBRUARY 25, 1945, *The New York Times* ran a four paragraph item on a statement made by Andrei Schevchenko, a Soviet representative in the United States, in which he hailed the Bell Aircraft Company for having helped Russia "turn the tide" against Nazi Germany. Commented Schevchenko: "When things seemed darkest in the Soviet Union more than two years ago, it was the quantity and quality of Bell Airacobras which played so important a role in helping to turn the tide in our favor. Russia has received 50 per cent of all Bell planes."

Should anyone happen to come across that routine news item today, he might well shake his head regretfully over the course of events since then, and reflect that at least this one representative of the Stalin regime had sincerely expressed his appreciation for America's aid in

the successful defense of his country. But this conclusion, however consoling, would be unfounded, for the same Andrei Schevchenko was a spy in the United States.

Nor can we be grateful to him for having finally told his sordid story. He never did, and he hurriedly left this country to prevent any such eventuality. We can only shake our fists after him in anger. Or shake our heads, in wonder, pondering on his escape.

For the details of his story we have to go to three loyal American citizens who, by the accident of circumstances, had the dubious pleasure of meeting Schevchenko and working with him, under instructions from the FBI, which proved more than a match for the Soviet agent.

One of these Americans is Mrs. Leona Vivian Franey of Niagara Falls, New York. She was born in

Dixon City, Pennsylvania, and in 1930 was hired by the Scranton school district as a clerk. She held the job for twelve years, finally becoming secretary to the principal. Her story in connection with Schevchenko begins in August, 1942, when she went to work for the Bell Aircraft Company of Buffalo, New York.

At that time she had not yet met the Soviet agent, but because of her work, he sought her out. Mrs. Franey was hired to establish a technical engineering library for the firm. The library would possess, in addition to regular reference volumes, reports of a confidential nature. These documents would come from the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics, the War Department, all of the bureaus under it, the Bureau of Ordnance, as well as from other sources.

In October, 1942, Bell Aircraft moved to a new plant on Niagara Falls Boulevard. Mrs. Franey went along as librarian. At that time there was still little in the newly organized library, no more than twenty-five books and four files from the National Advisory Committee for Aeronautics.

Shortly after, Schevchenko put in an appearance at the library. The request he made was anything but suspicious. He merely wanted to borrow some textbooks. He was given these, including a copy of Diehl's *Simple Aerodynamics*, which,

as the title would suggest, is hardly confidential.

The Soviet agent did not have to make his way around the Bell Aircraft premises furtively. During the war the Soviet Government sent representatives to plants manufacturing material which was to be purchased by Russia. Schevchenko was the representative at Bell Aircraft. He kept the library books for the normal period and then returned them.

Soon the library began to receive its first confidential reports, but these were few in number. At any rate, Schevchenko did not ask to see them. Nor were his visits frequent at this time. He merely came and went, abiding by the rules. His concern was with easily available textbooks and magazines.

As the library grew, he came more often. He was a generous man. He bought theatre tickets and made the library staff a present of them. In addition he gave small gifts of perfume, candy and other pleasing items.

HAVING DEMONSTRATED that he was a pretty nice fellow, he asked Mrs. Franey if she and her husband wouldn't go to dinner with him. He had already asked whether Mr. Franey was serving in the armed forces, and had been told that because of an injury he was ineligible. He was working at the Hooker Electro-Chemical Co. at Niagara Falls.

Mr. Franey has recalled the circumstances surrounding the invitation. "In 1942, after my wife started working at Bell Aircraft, she came on different days and told me about this Russian, about his coming up and asking her to help him out with his English, and so on, and that she said 'Yes' through sympathy. . ."

In this mood they went with him to a restaurant in Buffalo. They enjoyed dinner and the conversation was not of a kind to create suspicion. Schevchenko took pains not to reveal what he was after. He had merely wanted to meet Mrs. Franey's husband, and that was all.

Nor was there anything startling about his later request that they go to dinner again. Schevchenko wanted the Franey's to meet his wife. The appointment was made, but when the day arrived Schevchenko came alone. His wife, he implied, had a hangover from a party of the previous evening.

So the Franey's and Schevchenko sat in a park and had a pleasant chat. Gradually, the conversation took a turn and the Russian was explaining how advantageous it would be for the Franey's to go to Russia. Since Mr. Franey had lost one arm, the Soviet Union was just the place for him to be. It had wonderful compensation laws. A man like Mr. Franey would be cared for by the state for the rest of his life.

Nor did he miss the chance to describe Russia's wonderful vacation

system. If the Russian worker does a good job, the state does well by him. It sends him to excellent resorts, and so on.

Still there was nothing to be suspicious about. It was not strange for a Soviet representative to attempt to propagandize Americans. Up to this point that was all that Schevchenko had done. The Franey's were polite. Mr. Franey snickered under his breath; aloud, he commented on what a wonderful place the Soviet Union must be to live in.

Shortly after, Schevchenko began to ask for data at the library on jet propulsion. Since this had nothing to do with the P-39 planes the Soviet Government was buying, and Mrs. Franey had begun to wonder about his requests, she asked the other women in the library not to issue jet propulsion material to him. If he asked, he was to be told that the material was out.

A week after Mr. Franey had met Schevchenko for the second time, agents of the FBI came to the Hooker Electro-Chemical Company to see him. The company had constructed several buildings at the plant which were part of the Manhattan project, but Franey did not know that at the time. "Later on," he states, "I found out why the FBI was so interested in the Hooker

The concluding article in this espionage series will appear soon. This is one of four selections from the forthcoming book, Who Gave Russia the A-Bomb?

Company — it was because of the Manhattan project.”

The FBI asked him about Schevchenko, and he told them that his wife knew more about the Russian than he did, and suggested that they talk to her. They did, and from that point on, the Franeys state, they worked in cooperation with the FBI, and in accordance with their instructions. Mr. Franey has explained one of his reasons for being more than anxious to do so. “I felt I could not go in the service, because they would not accept me, so I felt we could do our part by helping the FBI.”

Andrei Schevchenko, the subject of FBI interest, was born in Khar'kov, Russia, on November 24, 1906. In 1936-37 he was a student at the Aviation Institute at Moscow, and later was employed as an engineer in the People's Commissariat of Aviation Industry in Moscow. He entered the United States on June 19, 1942, and until September 15, 1945, he represented the aviation department of the Soviet Purchasing Commission. It was during this period that he operated as liaison man between Bell Aircraft and the Soviet Government.

Under FBI instructions, the Franeys worked with Schevchenko. They furnished him with documents after the FBI had screened and approved the delivery. The material requested by Schevchenko, according to a list kept by Mrs. Franey,

included such documents as these: “Design of Ram Jets,” described as top secret; “The Intermittent Jet Engine,” described as restricted; “Manufacture of Blades for Junkers Turbo-Jet Unit,” described as secret, many other secret documents, as well as unclassified material.

Shevchenko, it seems, was well informed. Sometimes, Mrs. Franey says, he would request documents that had not yet been received by Bell Aircraft, material that would arrive from two weeks to two months after he had asked for them. “He asked me for data on swept-back wings almost before our own engineers were doing work on some of it.”

But this is taking us ahead of our story. In July, 1945, the Franeys, working with the FBI, visited Schevchenko at his apartment — Apartment 3-D at 4 West 93rd Street in New York City. He would not talk in the apartment. Fearing concealed microphones, he pointed to the walls as if to say, “The walls have ears.” He took the Franeys to Central Park and told them that he was interested in receiving 35-millimeter microfilm of classified reports. He also informed them that he would present them with a camera. The proposed arrangement was simple. Mrs. Franey would obtain the documents, take them home, and her husband would photostat them. Schevchenko would pay \$25 to \$30 for each photostated report, and the

number the Franey's could sell to him in this way, he generously added, was unlimited. But they had to cover the subjects in which he was interested. For a pep talk he told them that they were helping a wonderful ally. They weren't doing anything wrong at all.

Following this talk the Franey's received a postcard with a picture of the Empire State Building on it. This was their cue to be in New York. They met him, and again — away from the prying ears of possibly concealed microphones — walked and talked with him in Central Park. He wanted Mrs. Franey to obtain data on spring tabs. She said that she would.

ON THIS TRIP the Franey's had an especially interesting experience. They met Schevchenko at Amtorg Trading Corporation, the Soviet commercial arm in the United States. "That was like trying to get into a foreign country," Mrs. Franey says. Schevchenko had asked her husband to obtain certain data from the Hooker Electro-Chemical Company. Under the supervision of the FBI, the officials of the company gave him harmless information on the products they manufactured, and the Franey's took the package into the offices of Amtorg.

Even here Schevchenko pointed to the walls, meaning they were not to talk. "We sat very, very close to

him. We handed him the package and he nervously took it and unpacked it, and then he immediately grabbed a book on the window sill which was about the same size of the package we brought in, and we had to carry that out of the building. . . ." That is how Mrs. Franey remembers the visit.

On their next trip to New York City, the Russian presented the Franey's with the camera he had promised, a Contax, and explained how the pictures were to be taken. He also gave them printed instructions on the opening of the lens, the distance the camera was to be kept from the documents, and other helpful hints.

The Franey's returned home with the camera and turned it over to the FBI. They were told the camera had to be sent to Washington. "There was something wrong with it," Mrs. Franey recalls, "and they had it repaired."

Now, with the FBI tending the Russian Government's camera, the first batch of documents were micro-filmed and sent off. But, there was a hitch to this. Schevchenko had said that there were thirty-six exposures on each roll of film, but there were actually only thirty-four. Therefore almost the entire batch on the first roll of good Russian film was spoiled.

Shevchenko paid for the batch, and the money was turned over to the FBI by the Franey's. But the

Soviet agent was far from satisfied with what had been sold to him. The first batch was unclassified material, with titles chosen because they seemed to suggest secret data. (Later, it seems, some restricted material was passed to him so that he could, in the event of a trial, be convicted.) But Schevchenko's complaint was that the microfilm was not clear. "He was very nervous," Mrs. Franey says. "He would stand away from the windows. He would stand in the middle of the floor. He was always very, very nervous. He smoked one cigarette after another and seldom listened to what you had to say. He liked to issue the orders and have you move as he directed."

The deliveries of film to Schevchenko were made by Mr. Franey. He would travel by plane to New York City and back. After the first two trips, the FBI asked him not to deliver the next microfilm batch. The Franey's were told that orders had come through from Washington to hold up the operation. Mr. Franey therefore concocted the excuse that his wife was sick, and this is what Schevchenko was told.

One day in September, 1945, Schevchenko came to the Franey's house and asked to see the camera he had given them. Mr. Franey was fearful that the Russian might ask to see the floodlights. Since the floodlights belonged to the FBI, and the FBI had taken them back to

their office, he told Schevchenko that he had been taking motion pictures at some relative's house and that he could run over and get them if Schevchenko wanted him to. Fortunately, Schevchenko refused the offer. States Mr. Franey: "At that time we were in a spot, and he was very, very nervous."

When the time arrived for their next trip to New York City, the FBI again asked the Franey's to cancel it. "I told them," Franey recalls, "I didn't think we should cancel the trip for the simple reason that he might get suspicious, because we had canceled one trip and he was very, very nervous." But the FBI agents told them they were working on orders. The Franey's were involved in a risky adventure, and the strain was beginning to show. "We talked at that time," Mr. Franey has said, "about giving up the whole affair, because it was rather nerve-racking as far as we were concerned."

Shevchenko sent a "runner" to the Franey's one Sunday afternoon. The man — whose name was Vishinsky, but who was not the prosecutor of the Moscow purge trials who later rose to wider fame in the UN — said he wanted "all the junk." Mr. Franey told his wife to sit down and write a letter to Schevchenko telling him the material he wanted hadn't arrived, but there was some coming in, and it was just what Schevchenko had asked for. The

runner left.

A month later Mr. Franey received a telegram asking him to come to New York. Schevchenko, who had been transferred by the Soviet Government from Bell Aircraft to a top job at Amtorg, wanted to interview him for a job at the Soviet affiliate. When Franey arrived at the Russian's apartment, he found that Schevchenko was at school. He had a "class" every Sunday morning. Franey waited in the apartment for three hours, a silent wait because Mrs. Schevchenko didn't, or said she didn't, speak English.

Franey handed Schevchenko a shipment of film when the Russian returned. Schevchenko, as was his habit, turned the radio on full blast while they spoke briefly. He paid for the film, then went with his guest to the park and they continued their conversation on a bench. He told Franey that suspicions might be aroused by Franey's frequent airplane visits to New York City. Therefore the next meetings would take place in Buffalo. Franey was to meet a runner in front of a certain store in that city, and two specific dates were set.

On both Saturdays, as arranged, Franey went to the appointed place in Buffalo, but no one showed up. Later, the FBI called Mrs. Franey at Bell Aircraft and told her that Schevchenko was gone. He had left the country on January 2, 1946.

THESE AMAZING activities, reported in the sworn testimony of the Franey's before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, were followed by an equally startling series of events. Loren G. Haas, a young engineer of Buffalo, New York, also met Schevchenko, had proposals put to him, and under instructions from the FBI, cooperated with the Soviet agent.

Haas worked at Bell Aircraft from the end of 1942 to March 1945. His job was the training of a number of Russian pilots and technical personnel. In these circumstances he was introduced to Schevchenko.

One day he was asked to give a routine talk to the management and engineering department of Bell Aircraft, as well as to the Russian representatives at the plant, on the power system of the planes being built at Bell. In the course of the discussion, the Russians wanted to know why the system was not working more efficiently. Since Haas had been doing some work of his own during his free time, he said he thought he knew why. Then he explained how the situation could be improved.

The managers of the firm frowned on Haas' comments, since they had previously rebuffed his proposal, the merits and demerits of which we are not equipped to discuss. The Russians, however, were all ears. They asked Haas if his innovation would work. Believing that it would, he said so. The Russians immediately

set up a clamor and demanded to know why it wasn't on their planes. They loudly insisted that no more planes be shipped to their Government unless Haas' equipment were incorporated.

"The situation that I found myself in at that time," Haas says, "was one, perhaps, which the Russians did take advantage of. They knew that I was, roughly, on the 'outs' with my employers, and a potential source of information."

The incident is important for our story only insofar as it created a friendship between Haas and Schevchenko. Another incident which followed made them even better friends. The inventive Haas had developed a supercharger which he hoped would up the speed of an aircraft by about fifty miles an hour. The use of two of them might increase speed by about seventy-five miles. Schevchenko invited Haas to dinner, and asked him to put a price on the gadget. After talking the matter over with his wife, and realizing that if the deal were made "it would be illegal," Haas decided to set a price that would "really knock his eyes out." He asked for \$500,000.

Shevchenko, contrary to expectations, was not amazed. He remained businesslike, telling Haas that the young engineer would have to discuss the deal with a Colonel Pisonoff. The Colonel did come to Bell Aircraft, and finally told Haas that the price was too high. Two in-

teresting things Haas noted were these: when he asked Pisonoff how the Russians could utilize the gimmick without the inventor, Pisonoff told Haas he would have no difficulty in getting him transferred to the Soviet Union. Also, there would be no difficulty in getting the money into the United States.

The deal was never culminated, but thereafter Haas and Schevchenko were in "constant social company." Since the FBI had been observing Schevchenko, they then contacted Haas. They requested that he maintain his friendship with the Soviet agent, in the belief that he might eventually approach him from the espionage angle.

Shevchenko, who was transferring to Amtorg, asked Haas to find a job in an organization where he felt he could make better use of his knowledge of gas turbines. Haas sought and found employment with the Westinghouse Electric Company as a test engineer, that firm being at the time perhaps the furthest advanced in gas turbine engines, and a forerunner in technical developments used in today's most powerful engines.

Haas moved to Philadelphia. On March 18, 1945 — he kept a notebook in which he recorded his contacts with Schevchenko — he received his first requests from the Soviet agent for "highly secret turbo jet engine data, drawings, reports," and other similar information. On

the advice of the FBI, Haas agreed to work with Schevchenko.

From March, 1945, until late that year, in about twelve shipments, "innumerable exchanges of microfilm" were made. All material was screened, and when necessary, doctored by the FBI.

"The data which we gave Mr. Schevchenko while I was in Philadelphia," says Haas, "was of such a nature as to be greatly misconstrued, misleading, and entirely wrong. This might seem rather difficult to put across with a man like Schevchenko, but it is my personal opinion that while he was a very intelligent and learned man, the job he was tackling was not for one man, but perhaps for an entire company, and he tried to do it all. Naturally, he did have help, alleged help."

In the course of conversations with Haas, Schevchenko said that he was a competitor in a "contest," the prize being 500,000 rubles. The object of the innocent competition: "the complete design of an ultra-high-speed aircraft powered by jet propulsion."

HAAS CAME to know Schevchenko well. He would meet him in New York and they would go to various places for entertainment. Haas would slip him the microfilm "under the table" in a restaurant, "or while we were walking in a crowded subway." Haas found Schevchenko's apartment, despite

wartime scarcities, well stocked with cigarettes, food, liquor and money. "He had," Haas says, "everything one could desire."

He, too, found the Russian to be very nervous. He was also an excessive drinker. On occasion Schevchenko would drink so much that Haas refers to those times as "numbed periods." Schevchenko would then hand him the Soviet line that has been so successful with some scientists recruited by the Communists. "I am a Russian," Schevchenko would say, "that is true, and you are an American. But we can't let nationalities interfere with progress. Scientists must be international."

For nine months to a year Haas turned over microfilm documents to Schevchenko. He had been given a camera, a Leica, but unknown to Schevchenko all the microfilm work was done at the FBI offices. Haas would take the microfilm to New York, turn it over to Schevchenko, and be entertained. He would be paid, about \$100 to \$200 at a time, and then he would turn the money over to the FBI.

"In many of the cases of the contacts," Haas has explained, "there was no information. It can readily be seen, the difficulty of screening truly secret information. It must go through proper channels. For instance, if I was there one weekend and he had requested my presence within two weeks, I would attempt to stall him at least three weeks in

order for that information to be cleared and doctored and prepared; and in some cases it was impossible to obtain the information. It was a matter of not making excuses, but preparing him to expect something much better, making the delay worth-while."

In the course of his talks with Schevchenko, the Soviet agent boasted to him that he was well acquainted with presidents of a number of leading companies in this country. He also revealed to Haas that he knew of secret developments. He mentioned one jet engine in the secret stage being manufactured by a leading company before any announcement had appeared.

Just before Christmas 1945 Schevchenko, while entertaining Mr. and Mrs. Haas, and in an unusually nervous state, asked if Haas had been contacted by the FBI. Haas said of course not, he hadn't. Schevchenko then suggested that Mrs. Haas bring the next shipment to him. This the FBI, when Haas related the proposal to them, would not sanction. Schevchenko had told Haas that there would be a new method of payment. Mrs. Haas and Mrs. Schevchenko would go shopping, and the latter would foot the bill. The Haases were a bit alarmed, and Mrs. Haas didn't show up for the appointment.

The last word they received from Schevchenko was a postcard in which he announced that he was going to Russia for his "health."

Said Haas of the Soviet agent's espionage quest: "Today our best aircraft, our most recent aircraft, is the Lockheed F-90. It has 35° swept-back wings. It is powered with engines as he wanted them then in the development stage. If Mr. Schevchenko had been able to gather this information and consummate it . . . and had the help to do it, four years ago the Russians could have had the aircraft which we have today."

The most bewildering aspect of l'affaire Schevchenko is his escape. Why didn't the FBI, which had tracked down the Soviet agent so brilliantly, move in on him and make the arrest? On this point, the Franey and Haas are less equipped to testify expertly.

When asked if he knew why Schevchenko had left the country, Mr. Franey said that he knew "only that the leak came out, and he got it just like he got everything else. He had information before the library (at Bell Aircraft) got it, and he got information from somebody that this leaked out, and that is why he left the country."

Then he said: "The FBI, when they asked us to cancel the trip, said they got orders from Washington that the State Department wanted to hold this up and appease them a little bit, and asked us if we would cooperate. I told them at that time I was getting sick and tired of cooperating; that the State Department didn't have to face him, that

I was the one who had to face him. The agent said they could see my side of it and wouldn't want to be in the same shoes I was in at that time. But they said, after all, they got their orders and they had to pass them on to us. . . .

"The FBI told us that the New York office wanted to pick him up and the Buffalo office wanted to pick him up, and they told us they couldn't do anything, that their hands were tied, that they just had to go along a little bit longer and hold off a little bit longer. They said they had enough information to pick him up on." He named an FBI agent, "Buz Roberts," as the one who had told him that the State Department wanted to hold up the arrest.

HAAS' BELIEF was that Schevchenko, in time, realized that he was being followed by the FBI. He recalled that the FBI had rented an apartment with a good view of the Soviet agent's apartment. From their secret perch, the FBI had taken motion pictures of people entering and leaving the building, and of whatever they could through Schevchenko's window. One day the Soviet agent indicated to Haas that he knew where the FBI agents were. "He first kept looking over at the point where they were stationed, and finally, in a very disgusted manner, he pulled down the shades."

Haas was angry at the way the

case had turned out. "The Franey and myself and my wife," he said, "when this started we were just four of millions of people in this country, and through circumstances, we became involved, and for at least a year were subjected to, let us say, the trials and tribulations . . . of dealing with a character who was a potential murderer and thief. There were reports in the paper along about that time referring to the Amtorg Corp. as being headquarters for this association referred to loosely as NKVD (the Soviet secret police). They were supposedly in the same headquarters with Amtorg, and Mr. Schevchenko was supposedly in charge of Amtorg. Anyone could put two and two together and it would involve a degree of restlessness.

"I feel, and I am sure the Franey feel, that Schevchenko was not merely a Russian, but a potential murderer and thief. His obtaining the information he desired to obtain from Mrs. Franey and myself would give the Russians, if they were ever an enemy and not an ally, the weapons with which to murder us. . . .

"The part we played was perhaps not too dangerous, and it was exciting, and anyone would have done it, but what I would like to bring out is: How many times would I have done it? Frankly, with the outcome that we have had in these circumstances, I wouldn't have done it again." He added that the FBI

agents had told him that they had an "airtight case" against Schevchenko.

At the tail end of his testimony, Haas said — seeming to regret his comment even before he finished it — that he had been told by the FBI agents that the Secretary of State at the time in question had held up the arrest. Apparently realizing that the Secretary's name was probably being used as a loose synonym for the Department of State itself — Haas said that perhaps he should not have said what he did. At any rate, an immediate and forthright denial on this point came from the former Secretary of State, a respected American, who said: "Never did I tell any official of the government not to arrest anyone. That is not a matter for the Secretary of State, but one for the Department of Justice and the FBI." It was not clear, however, whether this statement was intended as a blanket denial covering the State Department, too, or as purely a personal one.

For the charge against the State Department has been raised since. On September 15, 1949, Larry E. Kerley, identifying himself as a former special agent of the FBI, testified under oath before a subcommittee of the Senate Committee on the Judiciary. He briefly referred to the Schevchenko affair, characterizing it as a "case involving inter-

ference of the State Department in the arrest of a Soviet espionage agent in this country." Recapitulating a few details of the case, he stated: "These loyal Americans, Leona Vivian Franey, Joseph John Franey, and Loren G. Haas, at considerable risk to their personal safety and under the supervision of the FBI, built up a strong espionage case against Andrei V. Schevchenko." He concluded: "The State Department would not permit an arrest, and Schevchenko left the United States in January, 1946."

There the matter rests. That is as far as any private writer can go. Any further information on this bewildering case, especially on Schevchenko's escape, must come from public agencies in possession of the full facts. It has not been our function here to judge, but to describe.

What remains is a certain impression of Schevchenko, and it is a symbol of the entire case. Schevchenko was, as each of the persons who worked with him has stated, a very nervous man. But, as things turned out, he had nothing to be nervous about. Instead, not knowing exactly how many Schevchenkos there were, in this and other cases, how many there may be among us now, and just how successful some of them may have been, we are the ones who seem to have reason to be nervous.

A Selection from *By the Waters of the Danube*

A Period of Barbarism

ALEXANDRA ORME

This is the first of several forthcoming excerpts from Alexandra Orme's new book, which will be brought out by Duell, Sloan and Pearce as a MERCURY book sometime next fall. The action of By the Waters of the Danube begins in Budapest in 1945; it tells of a strange life in a wrecked and demoralized city, where former counts and princes and ambassadors were trying to find new ideas and ideals better suited to a new world, in which they had to live under the shadow of the Soviet Union. Alexandra Orme's first book, Comes the Comrade, published by William Morrow and Company, was a best seller and a Book-of-the-Month Club selection.

ONE DAY MY friend Martha came to the Sereno accompanied by a British major. Since she was selling furniture to the British military mission, the major was allowed to fraternize with her, and had invited her as a business friend to take a drink with him. The sahib had joined them, and they arrived in his jeep. The Countess Denise, who was proprietor of the Sereno, blushed with pleasure: this was the first

time that Anglo-Saxons had come to patronize our bar. I waited on them. The major was delighted to hear that I was Polish — for thus the ban against fraternization did not apply to me, and he invited me to lunch at the British officers' mess on the next day. While he was still telling me elaborately that only I was invited, I was already wondering how I could get a day off from my work, and what I would wear. But

Denise granted me leave without difficulty, and the sahib, who proved quite human on closer acquaintance, offered to come for me in his jeep.

On returning home that evening I announced that a British major had asked me to lunch with him at his mess. I pretended to be casual about it, though in fact I was bursting with joy, for my social isolation was weighing very heavily upon me.

"You won't go," Jumbo said. "A wife is not invited without her husband."

A lengthy argument developed between Jumbo and me. I appealed to his pity, telling him how starved I was, but he refused to let me go, even for the sake of a meal. I reminded him that last winter I had accepted invitations from Russian officers for fear that otherwise they would have us shot. Now, only because these foolish Englishmen did not shoot people for such reasons — only because of such a stupid, unessential difference — I was to be prevented from having a decent meal, with a napkin spread on my knees.

"No!" Jumbo was stubborn.

I was broken-hearted. Finally by night time he had pity on me. He announced that he would let me go, and he even made fun of me.

"You have behaved as though you were Constantine!" I cried bitterly.

Unfortunately Jumbo belonged to a generation that could not be of-

fended by such a comparison.

The jeep came for me at the appointed time — it had been long since I had experienced such punctuality. Needless to say, I wore my perennial dress made of a hanging, and my hair still stood up like the bristles of a brush. I was elated, excited. As I passed by Schatzi, who was as usual squatting on the floor behind the counter, I whispered triumphantly: "Well, who won the war?"

Schatzi raised her head — she was eating from her pot — and said with her mouth full: "*Hol' dich der Teufel!*"

Sitting in the jeep, I felt as Hitler must have felt after conquering Paris. Only I scarcely knew what to talk about with the sahib. I wanted to tell him how starved I was, and how happy I was at the prospect of a good meal, but I felt that he would not appreciate or understand such a remark. Therefore I said that the spring was beautiful, to which he eagerly agreed. We drove carefully around the holes in the pavement near the Tiger tank, and sped on along the empty streets. I racked my brain for a suitable topic of conversation. Should I tell him that during the war I had met a British officer from India who had escaped after being taken prisoner by the Germans, and whom some Poles had helped to hide in Budapest? But I feared that he might interpret this as a boastful gesture, and Julia had

told me that her sahib was a real sahib; this meant that in his eyes everything that was not British was foreign — that is to say, inferior. Finally I made another timid remark about the spring. Fortunately, at that moment we drove up to the house occupied by the British military mission.

I followed the sahib slowly up the stairs, for the elevator was out of order. All about us soldiers stood stiffly at attention. For me, who had spent a number of months with the Red Army, this was a strange world. No private spoke to the sahib, no one patted him on the shoulder, or joked, or tried to trip him. I observed all this with a feeling of incredulity; but it seemed that the sahib did not think it unusual that no one should try to trip him or to offer him sunflower seeds.

IN THE ENTRANCE hall we were courteously greeted by a normal, ordinary attendant. I thought of our cook and Pista, who used to yell at us and terrorize us like our governesses. In the drawing room — an ordinary drawing room in which there was nothing to remind one of the devastated city outside — I was treated to a drink. Then some British officers of high rank came in. Once more I racked my brain for something to talk about, but recalling Maurois' novel *Les Silences du Colonel Bramble*, I kept a bold and confident silence. One man ventured

the remark that the day was beautiful, and all the others at once politely agreed with him. Because I was starved, the drink that I had accepted out of politeness soon went to my head. Then a butler appeared in the doorway, announcing that luncheon was served.

There was a spacious dining room, with a long table, china, silver, flowers, napkins — everything as it should be. I stood dazzled, trying to conceal my feelings. Suddenly I was ashamed. But ashamed of what? "Why are you ashamed?" I kept wondering in my stupefied state. Had I been so long deprived of the ordinary things of life that a napkin could impress me so much? "Don't be ashamed, you fool!" I was saying to myself. But to no avail. "To what world do I belong?" I was wondering in my discomfiture. To this one, with its servants and napkins, or to that other world, that does without napkins but boasts places such as Kolyma? "Please don't be ashamed," I pleaded with myself. "It's nobody's fault — not theirs, not yours."

I was the only woman there and the only guest. The officers sat down; my place happened to be between a Scottish brigadier and a rear-admiral. Having exhausted all the encomiums that the spring deserved that year, they asked me whether I was Polish, how long I had been living in the city, and how I had spent the winter. They were questioning me without the slightest curiosity, without the

insatiable obtrusiveness of the Russian soldiers. Actually they did not want at all to know how I had spent the winter. But I answered them — that is, I began to answer them by giving them an account of the Red Army from the inside, the Red Army in shirtsleeves, so to speak. The response was a stony, shocked silence — a silence so distinct and eloquent that I perceived it even through the alcoholic vapor clouding my senses. I stopped abruptly.

I was immediately rebuffed for my tactless sally by a colonel, who seemingly in no context at all, recounted that two days before he had been asked to supper by Voroshilov, but since he was suffering from the gripe, he had been unable to accept the invitation of his Russian colleague. Voroshilov had dropped everything, jumped into a car, and ordered his chauffeur to drive him with all haste to the bedside of his sick English friend. Voroshilov had actually come to inform himself personally of the state of the colonel's health. That was the kind of man Voroshilov was. There followed several instructive remarks on the forthrightness of Soviet manners, springing from the simplicity and child-like kind-heartedness of the Russians. Listening to this thesis, I realized with horror that these men thought I was decrying the boorish manners of the Russians. Moreover, I noted in the course of the ensuing discussion that they looked upon the

Russians as being of one piece; in their eyes the government and the people were one and the same thing.

While my mind was evolving a new picture of the world, in which every government was symbolized by the meaning of the word "Caesar's" in the New Testament, the thinking of these men was conformed to their customary standards. According to these standards, any government expressed the will of the people. This was their concept of the normal state of affairs, just as this excellent lunch and the mute butler behind the screen were normal. The world that had collapsed forever in this part of Europe was still their normal world, still actual and full of seeming vitality.

They proceeded to tell each other about all the favorable experiences they had had in contacts with Russian staff officers in order to wipe out the effect of my blunder, and to offset the unpleasant suggestion of a possible critical attitude about the friendly *entente* between the two nations. These British officers were loyal, honest, and disciplined. They shut their eyes to vast areas of truth, not because their system was based on lies, but because they were good soldiers. They had been ordered to stick their heads into the sand. And they were obeying — and shutting their eyes tight to keep out the biting particles. Needless to say, they preferred the high-ranking Soviet officers to simple privates. With the

officers, they said, one could reach a common ground, but the soldiers — at this point they smiled patronizingly.

I kept an abashed silence. These officers were now carrying allegiance to such a point that they were describing to me the beauty of Soviet women. With drunken stubbornness I countered with the comment that the late Peter Fleming, an Englishman, had said in his book, *News from Tartary*, that the Soviet system had no room for feminine beauty, and that only in Harbin had he seen beautiful Russian women. But they rebuffed me — or rather, they coldly and politely informed me that the native interpreters attached to the Russian headquarters were very pretty, particularly one sixteen-year-old girl. They were appeased when I immediately granted that the interpreters with whom *they* dealt were certainly pretty. I said this with a sly smile, which they interpreted as a sign of embarrassment. Then, for some time, we went on eating in silence — that is to say, they went on eating, for I was wolfing everything that was placed before me.

The Brigadier, being a seasoned army man, must have observed that I was ravenous, for bending towards me he said casually that when he was a captive of the Germans he ate grass. I had an impulse to boast that in the preceding winter I had gnawed stalks of corn left behind by Cossacks' horses, but I was now

sober and thought it best not to mention any Cossacks. After all, the Cossacks had just been fighting on the side of the West, but I was constantly forgetting this, despite the fact that I had listened for years to the BBC and the Voice of America.

After dinner we were served coffee and liqueurs in the drawing room. Later when I returned to the Sereno and described everything in detail, finishing on those words — "coffee and liqueurs" — Schatzi burst out laughing.

"Coffee and liqueurs!" she repeated, laughing diabolically — I don't know why.

The other members of the Sereno staff also laughed, without bitterness, merely because the fact seemed to them funny. Finally I too recovered my psychic balance and joined in the laughter about the coffee and liqueurs, as though the joke were about great-grandmother's bustle.

And so we had coffee and liqueurs. I could scarcely move because of the quantity of food I had devoured, and my mind was again eclipsed for a moment. I said that I was completing my memoirs of my experiences with Russian soldiers and asked whether there was not someone who could help me to smuggle my manuscript to England. But none of them seemed to know how to do it, and once again there was an unpleasant silence. Then we talked about the czardas, about hunting, gypsy music, and other

Hungarian national predilections. This conversation went smoothly and cheerfully, for none of my hosts realized that the topic of our talk was a corpse, still warm, but a dead body — dead forever like every other corpse.

As I was leaving, the sahib came into the foyer and, with the help of a recurrent "Hem!" to straddle such a complicated situation, he explained as well as he could why I had been invited without my husband. Later I repeated these explanations to Jumbo, and in order to make him feel more kindly toward the innocent sahib, I imitated his hemming and hawing and the other symptoms of his predicament to the best of my ability.

The day after my participation in the British banquet, Fifi and her English friend Jane rushed into the Sereno as though someone were pursuing them. They took hold of me, and Fifi dragged me to the little dishwashing cell. I realized that something terrible had happened.

"What's the matter?" I asked in the darkness.

"The NKVD is after you."

"How do you know?"

"Tadzio has accidentally got wind of a new Polish Communist committee that is to take on consular functions for the time being."

"Is it because I had lunch with British officers yesterday?" I asked.

"No, it has nothing to do with that. They are looking for you under

your Polish name."

"Jesus Christ," I said. What else could I say?

"Maybe they are after your sister-in-law?" Fifi said to comfort me, for my voice was shaky with fear.

"Maybe," I said. However, my sister-in-law was not in Hungary.

"Try to avoid the committee and all Poles. Since the Lublin government has been recognized by the West, many of them have jumped on the bandwagon. They say we should remain loyal to our allies."

"I get it. Thanks," I said.

Fear was flooding me, coming on in sweat on my clenched hands, burning my scalp, and making my knees weak. I leaned against the wall.

"Don't be scared," Fifi said sharply. "The military NKVD is not the real one; they are only in transit here, like the ones you had last winter."

"All right then."

I had to go back to the counter. Fifi was sitting with Jane, her scrawny fair-haired friend, who was treating her to coffee, and there were several others at their table. Fifi made a sign to me that she had something else to tell me. I nodded to her and continued to wait on our patrons. I grew calmer as I worked. The burning sensation at the roots of my hair was gone, and my hands were no longer sweating. I had got rid of the physical symptoms of fear — but what next, little

man? As I waited on my customers, I could hear scraps of Jane's stories. She was telling her companions that the Russians had raped her only after she had proudly exhibited her British passport. She had been raped by a major, while the Hungarian baroness whom Jane was hiding had been raped by a mere captain. She giggled as she aired her tale, pushing back her fair hair with her big hand.

"I kicked him twice, but I got syphilis anyway — on lend-lease," she added laughing.

It's nothing to her, I thought bitterly; she could get all the penicillin she wanted from the military missions.

IN THOSE DAYS immediately after the end of hostilities it was considered good form to talk about how many times one had been raped and about the outcome of such experiences. Sitting in wrecked drawing rooms, grandmothers and granddaughters exchanged confidences. A year later, after the old forms of social life had been partly restored, etiquette again required that such experiences be passed over in silence. This was not only because the Russians were now increasingly feared, but also because Victorian standards were coming back in fashion. But I am describing that period of barbarism in which we lived without false inhibitions and told each other everything, like

children who had not yet learned not to speak of certain things.

That day I came home exhausted and threw my accumulation of tips on the table. It was still light in the room, although half of our windows were still boarded. Through the windows that had panes we could see the Danube; it was the color of coffee with milk, with yellowish reflections. Only the Viennese speak of the "blue Danube"; the Hungarians call it the "blond Danube." Directly in our view a wooden bridge was being built next to the ruins of the old one, and a gigantic pile of ironwork protruded from the swirling waters like grotesquely twisted stumps. Now dusk was falling, and the crescent was rising over the citadel hill; it was like a white sail on a calm sea. It reached the lavender edge of a cloud that was like a peninsula jutting out from an unexplored continent, and vanished behind it. The ruins all around, blurred by looming shadows, took on the fantastic outlines of jagged rocks, ruined fortresses and dream castles. Against the sky, atop the fire-scarred cupola of the royal castle, was flung the outline of St. Stephen's crown, with its inclined, half-broken cross. The crescent of the moon had moved around the lavender peninsula and was sailing across the darkening sea, growing more and more distinct and shining, like the inside of a shell.

It was a beautiful quiet evening.

But I could think only of the NKVD. Now I was so frightened that I could not even think of controlling myself. Fear was tormenting me physically; I was breathing with difficulty and my heart was beating furiously; I was torn by the distinct pictures my imagination was producing with speed and precision as though on an unending film reel. The air was sultry. I undressed and threw myself almost naked on my cot.

What had I done in the Polish underground? Nothing. I had not even formally joined it. I had not wanted to, I had been afraid, and I had refused to commit myself. I knew myself too well; if I had been struck in the face just once, I would have blurted out everything I knew and more. That was why I had preferred to know nothing during the war, and to give no pledge to the underground army. What did the NKVD want of me now? I must run away, escape to the West. No human being could stand this. And at once I replied to myself that millions of people were standing it. "But I can't, I can't," I repeated to myself, "I have no strength." I wanted to cry. One has to train oneself psychologically for martyrdom. One can face ordeal once or twice, at the price of a tremendous effort. But it is impossible to live for years in the conviction that any day, any hour, the final settlement of accounts may come. What have I

done that they could hold against me? I tried to remember, but I had nothing on my conscience. Nevertheless I was not in the least reassured.

Juliska, our cook, came in. When she lighted a lamp, she saw me lying naked on the cot. I was too weak to move because, in my fantasy, at that very moment an NKVD man was asking me whether I was willing to work for them, and I was in a sweat.

"Father, take this cup from me," I whispered in Polish. Then immediately I called myself a coward, a scoundrel, a low skunk. And I felt so sorry for myself in my tragic plight that tears came to my eyes. But it occurred to me that it was not advisable to cry in front of an NKVD man, and certainly not before the one I imagined standing in front of me. Actually, in front of me there was only Juliska.

"Has anyone ever heard of a lady lying around naked?" she blurted angrily. "You ought to be ashamed of yourself. A true lady would not do such a thing."

Juliska terrorized us. It was she, a cook, who now watched over our manners. She scolded me as no governess would have dared to do in my childhood. She hated me.

Terrible things were going on in her head, as in the heads of many poor Russians — collisions of ideas that were like collisions of trains in the night, monstrous catastrophes

magnified by the darkness. After working with her hands for twenty-two years, Juliska had just recently learned from the newspapers that the only work deserving of the name was manual work: for that reason, she had also learned that the true masters of the world were the workers. Jumbo did not work with his hands; in other words, he was a parasite, unless he could prove that he was of proletarian origin. But Jumbo had no chance at all. He was at one end of the scale, and at the other end was none other than Stakhanov himself.

FOR SOMEONE who has always regarded himself as insignificant, it must be a great pleasure to learn suddenly that he represents the apex of creation. When Jesus proclaimed that the humble would be exalted, and the meek rewarded, he easily must have won legions of slaves to his following. Now all the Juliskas were being told that they would be exalted and rewarded — not after death, but in this world, here and now, for the kingdom of man on earth was theirs. For the time being their reward was a negative one, depending on the fact that others were being humbled. Later, in the indefinite future, the reward was to assume a more positive character. While waiting for it, Juliska cooked for us and served us without pay, and sometimes, when her village brought her provisions, she

even fed us. But this was the very point at which violent collisions occurred. For we would thank her relatives from the village, inviting these peasants to our room, offering them our last bit of tobacco, sitting around the table with them, and conversing with them as with equals. Juliska, who looked upon her peasant family as trash, since she was retainer to a refined household, seethed with anger over our intimacy with mere peasants. We were not behaving as masters should: we were undermining her authority, her prestige. For twenty years Juliska had been proud of her superiority to her family, of being employed by real masters — and now something had gone wrong, she was a servant to penniless people, she was waiting on a bar waitress.

The fact that I was a waitress left Juliska not a moment of peace. She would often say to Jumbo, in the intimate tone of a family servant, that he was a parasite, because all day long he sat at his desk writing; and I would just as often remind her maliciously that every day I worked on my feet for ten hours, carrying heavy trays and waiting on the worst kind of riffraff. Or else I would embrace Vasili, my Russian soldier friend, if I met him on the stairs. Such incidents bewildered and infuriated our cook, almost drove her insane. For life now required Juliska to be simultaneously a Catholic and a Communist, a chauvinist and an

international revolutionary, a peasant and an urban semi-intellectual, a Hungarian patriot and a worshiper of Stalin, a loyal servant of our family, to which she had been attached for years, and our class enemy. She belonged to the lowest class of the population, that is to say, to the new elite. What could she understand of all this? And there were legions of Juliskas.

Pista, the servant of the collective, was far older than Juliska and more intelligent. He scolded not only us but also Ilona; he was like an old ailing dog that had been spoiled by the whole family, and his scolding was a way of showing that he cared for us. He was a staunch conservative, unshaken in his faith. But in the presence of strangers or police agents he behaved like an irreproachable servitor, finding this consistent with his sense of dignity. He would change himself into a stiff puppet, like a soldier donning uniform, helmet, and gas mask before going into battle. He was attached to the forms of the old world as to religious dogma, and he maintained — rightly, I suppose — that there must always be such a thing as service. And if it had to be, why should it not be of the best possible kind? Pista was completely unimpressed by what the newspapers were saying about manual work; he despised it deeply, for all menial chores had been done for him by inferior servants. Now, when there

were no other servants, Pista did their sort of work without complaining. In the same way, a general, when the situation calls for hand-to-hand fighting, may seize a rifle and fire it himself.

Most of us now lived by the grace of faithful servants like Juliska or Pista.

And now Juliska threw a towel over me, for I had no wrapper, and while setting the table she kept on scolding me. She did not know what she wanted of us or of herself; obeying two forces stronger than herself — her heart and her unenlightened brain — she simultaneously loved and hated our family.

Jumbo came home — late as usual. Ever since he had been without a car his time calculations had been off. Juliska scolded him too. When she finally went out, still grumbling, I told Jumbo and Janio about the NKVD. Jumbo was struck dumb by the news. Janio at once began to look for a way out. He decided to get to the core of the matter with the help of Tadzio and to hear the lion in his den — to go to the Communist Polish Committee and make inquiry there. I pinned all my hopes on Janio and Tadzio. But as soon as Janio went to bed, I began to importune Jumbo — I wanted to escape to the West. Jumbo, who had just been reinstated in his job, refused to do anything rash. We had no money, no papers of any kind, nothing. Running away was out of

the question, except perhaps if the British or American military mission should consent to help us. We had diplomatic passports issued under the privileges of the Knights of Malta, because for several years Jumbo had been *chargé d'affaires* of this order in Budapest.

"Try the Americans," he said, sighing.

Next day I told Denise that I had to have a leave, because I was going to the offices of the American military mission.

"What? Look at her! A favorite of the allies!" Denise cried. "Has Voroshilov invited you for caviar tomorrow?"

THE UNITED STATES military mission was housed in a large, almost undamaged building. Janio had gone to see the Polish committee early in the morning, and he was to wait for me near the mission. I saw him from a distance; he stood there radiant. He knew what the NKVD business was about, he said. During the war a Polish cousin of mine, when questioned by the Gestapo, had given my Polish name for his, because it was his mother's maiden name, and the first available one that came to mind in his distracted state. My cousin was a Jesuit, and had been questioned by the Gestapo because he had given refuge to British officers; this fact, turning up when the NKVD examined some captured Gestapo files, was sufficient

to alert interest in him. But since there was no trace of my cousin, the NKVD had been ferreting out his relatives, because it is useful to have a victim's relatives at hand. Meanwhile the investigators had learned that the lost Jesuit had been shot to death at Mathausen and there was no longer any need of hostages for him. I breathed with relief on hearing that I had lost my value as a hostage. Janio said that probably the NKVD was no longer looking for me, and the whole affair had been shelved.

"Tonight we'll have vodka," I said, and kissed him. Now, feeling light as a cloud, I sailed into the large ground-floor foyer of the American mission. I still wished to leave the country.

A crowd of people, mostly Jews, standing in a long, dense queue, filled the staircase. The American noncommissioned officer behind the desk was also a Jew, but he looked at those others with contempt as he chewed his gum. He was repelled by their wretched appearance. He was clean, shaved, well fed. Before him lay a pack of American cigarettes, which my eyes took in greedily whenever I looked at him, making my glance as alluring as possible. But at my age I could no longer be alluring to an American noncom. He emphatically refused to let me see the chief of the mission, but from my passport he concluded that I was not Hungarian, and sent

me upstairs to some other officer. But all this went slowly; it took quite a while for the noncom to realize that I was not applying for a visa to go to the United States, like all the people who stood in line in that place every day for nine hours. He simply refused to believe that I did not wish to go to America, and he explained to me emphatically and at great length, that I could not go there, which I had known all along. I agreed so readily that this was impossible that he thought I did not understand English, and resumed his explanations with great patience.

Finally, having pushed my way through a thirty-yard-long line of people, I got into a clear channel — that is, into an empty corridor; from there I went to the waiting room of some officer. This was my first encounter with the American army. I looked at the Stars and Stripes tacked to the wall with tenderness. This flag embodied a legend that made it seem to me the flag not of one nation among others, but of mankind. “Take us all under this flag,” people were pleading in their dreams. As I contemplated the little stars and the parallel stripes, I felt peaceful and blissful.

An officer came in — a big bull of a man, with close-cropped hair. From the doorway, and without greeting me, he asked me what I wanted. He too was chewing gum. I began by telling him that I was Polish, that is, not a national of any

formerly pro-Axis country; on the contrary, we had won the war together as allies, as colleagues. But the officer was not interested in my nationality, and he did not feel himself to be my colleague. Oh, why didn’t I look like the girls in Coca Cola ads? I showed him my passport. I pointed out that the British were helping their citizens who had been stranded in Hungary during the war to leave en masse, that the Americans were doing the same, and that the Russians were forcibly repatriating their nationals. I wanted to leave for a Western country, I said, but I did not know to what authorities to present my passport, for even the papal nuncio had left Budapest. But the officer did not know what a papal nuncio was, nor did he let me tell him, so deeply indifferent was he to all this. But he summoned one of his colleagues.

Another bull-like man swaggered in, an even taller one, with a bright strand of hair over a Germanic forehead. They held a consultation on my case. Finally the first officer turned to me, asking why my passport was not made out in English.

“It was made out in Rome,” I said, “that’s why it is in Italian.”

They were so well-fed, clean, strong, calm, self-confident, and well-dressed. They were not contemptuous; they were even polite, but so aloof, indifferent. They were

surely kindhearted men, but kindhearted in terms of the daily life of another planet—their country. I felt suddenly intimidated. Once again I stammered out a few words intended to explain my situation. But they insisted stubbornly that my passport should have been made out in English. I could not understand why. I stood silent before them, for it had not occurred to them to offer me a chair. At first they announced in serious, matter-of-fact tones that I could not go to the United States. Once again I sadly agreed. My gentle acquiescence baffled them, and they said again, this time more emphatically, that even to attempt to get to the States was out of the question in my case. Finally they declared that as a Maltese citizen I was under the jurisdiction of the British Commonwealth, just as I had been told the winter before, by the military NKVD. Malta is a British island, they informed me patiently. They could not do anything for me, but the British must—they must, these men repeated with emphasis, because I was under British jurisdiction. I thanked them and left. Now I knew myself finally to be thrown on my own resources, on my own ingenuity, and my underground tricks.

THE ONLY remaining bright spot on the horizon was my vodka party with Janio.

This bright spot turned out very

dark indeed. I left the Serena late, because that day we took care of our weekly bills, a task that took endless time, because our accounts were always in a mess. I walked with Janio on the square, near a wrecked bridge. In the falling dusk some children who had been feeding their chickens were calling to each other before going home.

Many children, and sometimes adults, came to this square to graze their chickens. The fowls were led by strings tied to their legs. Old men would come with geese under their arms; they would tether their animals by strings to the benches, and let them peck at the grass in the center of elegant Budapest, only two steps from the ruins of the Ritz. After a goose had plucked up all the grass in a given spot, the old man tending it would move to another place. I remember one little girl who would come with two chickens led by very long strings that were full of knots. She came every day, and every day the two chickens got snared in their strings, and the sad little girl would patiently disentangle them. These people were so poor that they kept live fowl in their apartments and fed them with the municipal vegetation.

Now at dusk, amidst cackling and quacking, all the fowl-keepers were hurriedly going home. We passed the monument of Queen Elizabeth; her chair was riddled with bullet holes. Under her left breast a big

piece of bronze hung loose, and at the site of her heart there was a gaping black hole. We entered a narrow, dark street. I said to Janio that it was getting late. "But I promised you a vodka treat tonight," I added. "Should anything untoward happen, you must let yourself be killed out of chivalry, and I'll run away. All right?"

"All right," Janio said gallantly.

At the other end of this street, in the house where Janio had his room, there was a little bar where we intended to have our drinks. The street was strangely deserted. I had never before been outside at such a late hour, and I grew apprehensive, particularly after we caught sight of a Russian soldier walking toward us. He walked slowly, with a reeling gait. His belt was tightly pulled in, and a tommy gun was bobbing on his stomach. His trousers were loose, like any Russian soldier's, his boots reached up about halfway to his knees, and his cap was cocked on one ear. We knew at once that he was an evil fellow. It was impossible to run away, and there was no opening into any side street. He was coming closer to us with each step we took. It was like a nightmare. We were tense, and we knew that he also was tense. We were like hostile beasts meeting in the wilderness, like dogs that have seen one another across a fence for years, and hate one another, and finally meet face to face.

"Your papers!" the soldier roared.

While Janio began to rummage in his German pilot's coat, trying to find a forged Russian paper stating that he was employed in a Russian veterinary hospital, I smiled at the soldier. Janio knew that he must not allow his wallet to be seen, because it would disappear into the soldier's pocket.

"It's an unpleasant assignment to have to walk the streets at night this way," I said to the soldier, though I knew perfectly well that he was not on duty, but was walking about the streets for his own pleasure.

He was taken aback at my speaking to him in Russian — so much so that he waved a hand toward Janio.

"Money!" he muttered to him in Hungarian.

Janio answered him in Russian: "What's the matter with you, brother? I am a Slav."

"Oh-oh-oh," said our Slav brother in a tone of pleased surprise, but he was only pretending; actually he was disappointed, for he had intended to rob us. Realizing this, we could not afford to wait until his plodding brain mechanism hatched up some move against us; we must at all odds steer his thoughts into simple paths, illumined by clear signal lights.

"Well, come and have a vodka with us. We've won the war," I said.

Janio gave him a friendly tap on

the shoulder. The soldier said, to save his face: "Since you're our own people, there is no need to look at your papers. Let's go."

The three of us entered the tavern. While Janio was diverting our guest, I thought of how the Kremlin was being forced to waste enormous potential psychological resources. Now that Russia was aiming toward world conquest, she had had to drop the idea of Pan-Slavism, which might so easily have been promoted. The Russian soldiers scattered in the non-Slavic countries were longing for contact with something familiar. Our soldier was a Siberian, and told us proudly that the Yugoslavs, Czechs, and Slovaks were all

Slavs. He also told us that Marshal Malinovsky was of Polish origin — this was meant as a compliment to us. We drank wine, for there was no vodka available. The soldier maintained that he felt at home with us, and that we should treat him to more wine, as befitted true Slavs. Sighing, we ordered more wine, on condition that he would see us home. We were a little afraid of him; nevertheless, it would be better to be with him than possibly to be accosted by a complete stranger. And so Misha escorted us to my home, and Janio once again spent the night on two chairs pushed together, as had been his fate quite consistently since the war.



A Mind Like Coney

CHANDLER BROSSARD

THE LAST INSTALLMENT of André Gide's *Journals** opens with these dark sentences: "At the rate at which we are going, there will soon not be many to feel the need of (cultural effort) . . . not many left to notice that it is no longer understood. . . . There is no acropolis that the flood of barbarianism cannot reach, no ark that it cannot eventually sink. One clings to wreckage. Everything is suspended in uncertainty." And it closes with this lyrical line: "Some days it seems to me that if I had at hand a good pen, good ink, and good paper, I should without difficulty write a masterpiece."

The polarity of these thoughts, these moods, is illustrative of the complexity and diversity of what may well have been the most in-

tellectually omniverous mind of the last fifty years, a mind that came to final rest recently at the age of eighty-one.

Reading Gide's *Journals* is like making a long journey through a combination of Coney Island and an international exposition of arts and crafts, then winding up at Madison Square Garden for a nightcap. There was absolutely nothing — no sensation, no field of endeavor, no variation on a variation, no idea, no type of person — that Gide was not immensely curious about and did not try to experience, in whatever way he could, for the sheer love of experimenting and functioning as a living body and a mind. Continually questioning, recording, comparing, wondering . . . never stopping, always moving, even if only back and forth. When he had to take morphine, for example, for one of the many physical ailments that

* *The Journals of André Gide*, Vol. IV, 1939-1949 Knopf; \$6.00.

harassed him in his later years, he was not satisfied with the fact that the morphine carried out its orders and eased the pain. That was not enough. He was disappointed with it because it did not bring "any of the paradisiacal quality I had anticipated." He was a voluptuary among voluptuaries. And then you hear him say, a few pages and months further on, "I have just read from cover to cover Gaston Dupuy's little book on radioactivity . . . without understanding much, but with uninterrupted amazement." Anything to keep his mind and reactions going, comprehension notwithstanding.

It would be almost impossible to discuss the Gide of the Journals in any way other than his own capricious sporadicness. So let's just reach right in and take up . . . his reading.

GIDE MUST have read everything that was ever written, including the Bible in the original. (He frequently called reading his "unpunished vice," and wanted to break it but could not.) While no aspect of a particular book or writer escaped his sharp attention, my reaction to his literary judgments, his tastes, etc., is that in the aggregate there is, unfortunately, something girlish about them. (And I don't mean this as a pun on his self-confessed homosexuality.) I can't put my finger on any specific comment

which reveals this; rather it is an accumulation of comments, enough to establish a tone. Take this: "I never wrote anything good save in joy." Add this: a certain book has "plunged me into a fit of indescribable blues." Then this: apropos of a quotation from Proust, "A remarkable sentence, indeed, despite its three errors in French in seven words." And top it with this: "Am rereading *The Red and the Black* with indescribable rapture." See what I mean? My objection is that this girlishness constitutes a kind of littleness that finally works against his stature as a distinguished person.

On the subject of American literature, Gide throws me completely. It was his passionate opinion (shared, among other Europeans, by André Malraux) that one of our very best, most creative writers was none other than old Maltese Falcon Hammett himself. Moreover, he was so impressed with the dialogue in *Red Harvest*, perhaps Hammett's cheapest and least interesting book, that he suggested that both Faulkner and Hemingway should beat it on the double up to Hammett's studio for a few pointers. That's not all. He matched Steinbeck with Chekhov, the best of Chekhov to be exact, and went on record praising Pearl Buck as a first-rate writer of fiction. Now what can you make of such judgments as these?

But it is not only in the field of foreign writing that he turns up

some beauts. He does so in his own backyard as well. He had the quite remarkable distinction, when he was reading for a French publishing house, of rejecting Proust's *Remembrance of Things Past*. (I'm told he did this because he disliked the way Proust, in contrast to himself, kept his homosexuality under cover in his writings.) And when he finished reading Franz Kafka's fantastic novel *The Trial*, he could find nothing more brilliant, more shattering to say than that the remarkable thing about the book was that you identified with the hero.

HOWEVER, MAYBE I'm riding him too hard. He did match these undistinguished insights with some that were very much alive and accurate. His observations on Stendhal are particularly sharp and lively, and, more than that, of use to writers who are trying to discover new ways in literature. (He remarked that "the vivacity of Stendhal's style is constituted by the fact that he does not wait until the sentence has completely taken shape in his head to write it down," which would account for the unusual, almost continual motion of his prose.) His observations on Shakespeare, Goethe, Thomas Mann, Paul Claudel, Paul Valéry, seem to me to be deeply felt and most perceptive. And his occasional remarks on such people as Montaigne, Voltaire, Hugo, Balzac, have the highly pleas-

urable effect of making you want to go back over their work for things you were in too much of a hurry, or too bored, to see for yourself.

This aspect of Gide's role as a man of letters is one of his most praiseworthy. His spade turns up whole sections, lines, phrases, in these people that you never suspected existed in them, and at this point you have been reawakened by Gide. Balzac, in particular, who has suffered the deadly fate in this country of being too much of a classic for one to bother reading with much real animation, is disinterred with great effect. For this one act in particular I'm very grateful to Gide.

Gide on religion, however, is something else again. I cannot really believe him. By that I mean I question his passion, the validity of his feeling, and the extent of his commitment. He strikes me as merely playing with religion for a certain type of intellectual voluptuousness, for a chance to be verbally interesting and clever about it. (Of course, I also recognize the possibility that I may merely be projecting my own non-commitment to the religious idea and experience. I have never regarded the truly religious experience as being part of contemporary experience, the church and God having, I feel, lost out in my time; and so I am apt to question the sincerity of anyone, especially an intellectual, who tells me he is religious in the traditional

sense.) It was a thing of the mind with Gide and this is the very thing that religion is not.

When, for instance, he states that "man is responsible for God" and "the wonderful thing is that by believing he was saving humanity Christ did actually save it," he seems to me, by the banality of such statements, to be more of a *voyeur* than a passionate participant. I could not begin to consider his religious feeling with the same seriousness and respect that I have for, say, Dante or John Donne or even Gide's own beloved Montaigne.

All you have to do is read what they said about God and you will quickly see the difference. To these men God was undoubtedly as real and as near as their next door neighbor, not just an abstraction that you could get off some good cracks about when you were in good form. I might even say that at times Gide's relationship with the religious idea has the same spectacular, restless, inevitably superficial quality as his relationship with the myriads of other items — from radioactivity to fish shells — that his huge appetite hunts down.

To drag back my earlier metaphor of Coney Island — when you've made the Gide tour and are on your way back home, you are loaded down with all kinds of strange candies and bright objects and snapshots and prizes which you suddenly discover you have absolutely no

further use for, no appetite for, now that you are away from the place. But they looked irresistible when you were going through.

NOW WE CAN get down to the subject of Gide's widely discussed homosexuality. With the possible exception of a well-known English poet, I cannot think of anyone else in this age who has spent so much time and energy publicizing his own sexuality, his own deviations therein. He has done it with a vanity and a glee, almost a weird smugness, that makes me think of the way Elsa Maxwell scatters the names of celebrities she has peeled a grape with or been insulted by. It is the least attractive thing about Gide's personality and by far the most boring thing about him intellectually. I don't say this because I have a prudish point of view regarding sex, or because I think homosexuality is a dreadful, dreadful thing and something ought to be done about it.

Not at all. I don't give a whistling damn what a writer's sexuality is so long as he does not vainly imagine that it is an endless and fascinating source of material for public discussion. Unless it is treated with the quite serious transcendence of a Proust, or a Joyce, sexuality, and especially homosexuality, is a bloody bore after a while. I particularly find fault with it when it becomes not only an act but also a totally

permeating point of view, a point of view that is generally and in the deepest sense emasculate and unusable. It is a point of view, intellectually and otherwise, that is really concerned only with a surface sensuality, a decorativeness, an exotic angle.

Thus, Gide finds fault with both France and Spain because of their "cult of Woman, the religion of Love, and a certain tradition of amorous intercourse which so much dominates manners . . . so servilely influences the way of life . . . (that) debasing love that sacrifices the best in man to skirts and the alcove." He seems almost to imply that he is vexed because these countries have such an exceptionally low incidence of homosexuality.

It is a point of view that makes him frequently view things only in terms of clichés. He observes a group of boys playing on the beach and thinks immediately of what a ballet choreographer could do with their energy and grace. That's all he apparently sees. It could not be cornier, more trite. While I'm on the subject, I may as well take the opportunity to say that, unlike a great many of my contemporaries, I was never knocked out by Gide's widely acclaimed homosexual novel, *The Counterfeiters*. A recent rereading of it has convinced me that, all things said and done, it is not really very much more than a skillfully conceived trade journal.

ON THE SUBJECT of politics, especially those of his own tormented country, Gide has said many things of pertinence and weight, but even here his statements are depreciated somewhat in my eyes by their marginalness, their constant professional amateurism. Where Gide pleases me most in these journals is as a gossip and also when he is merely jotting down a kind of report of the things around him — street scenes in French Morocco, conversations overheard in a park, his maid's charming stupidity, and so on. In fact, these sections are done so well, show so much natural reporting talent, that you wish he had done much, much more of it. He was a better journalist than his literary vanity would allow him to believe, and someone should have told him so, a long time ago.

Recommended

Conjugal Love. Alberto Moravia. Farrar, Straus, Young. \$2.50.

Mediocrity and marriage get a skillful dissecting.

The Morning Watch. James Agee. Houghton, Mifflin. \$2.25.

A small boy writhes in the clutches of religious experience. Concentrated, ambitious.

Three Novels of Ronald Firbank. New Directions. \$5.00.

Lovers of the baroque, the rococo, and the odd, this is your meat.



The Year's Prime Turkeys

GEORGE JEAN NATHAN

EACH AND EVERY theatrical season hatches some plays pre-eminent for the acuteness of the pain they give audiences, and the season now drawing to a close was not less deficient in such birds than the others. I herewith list the chief of them for the edification of the records.

First and foremost was a little beauty by the Messrs. Schulman and Lieberman (William H. and Martin R.) called *Springtime Folly*. The day before it opened, the mails brought me a message from a gentleman who described himself simply as "a Washington, D. C., theatregoer." It read: "This is to warn you that

you are presently to be inflicted with a pestilence worse than *Grandma's Diary*, *If the Shoe Fits*, *Victory Belles*, *The Girl from Nantucket*, *For Heaven's Sake*, *Mother*, *With a Silk Thread*, and *All You Need Is One Good Break*—all rolled into one. To wit, *Springtime Folly*. Happy playgoing!"

Since such out-of-town communications, more usually inspired by press-agents, friends of the plays' backers, the backers themselves, and others such, are customarily of a different tenor entirely and intimate that what I am about to see are unrivaled masterpieces, this one piqued my curiosity, though I approached the occasion with some doubt whether anything could be quite as nefarious as my correspondent had threatened. It didn't, however, take me long to be convinced. Not only was it exactly what he had indicated; it was so thoroughly and classically atrocious that how he omitted from his statistics *Anybody Home*, which was shown briefly in this same Golden Theatre two seasons ago and which by unanimous agreement was the worst play displayed on the American stage in the last fifty years, he will have to explain, if he can.

Contrived by a trio reported to be involved in the garment trade and, in one instance, also the confection of gags for the television and radio industries, staged by someone without any previous experience in

the theatre, and produced by a number of the malefactors' cronies, the thing had to do with a pair of partners in the maternity dress business and with their quarrels incidental to the marketing of one such garment which was slightly deficient in the necessary girth. As a substitute for dialogue, the characters ran shrieking around the stage, pausing only now and then to glare at one another and cough up the accumulations of saliva in their throats. As a substitute for humor, a pillow was employed to fill out one of the maternity gowns and placards were distributed on the walls proclaiming, "Our Gowns Are For Swell Women." As a substitute for farcical action, swinging doors were employed with an unremitting fever. And, as a substitute for acting, the help busied itself, at the rare moments when it was not galloping hither and thither, in falling across table-tops and collapsing into chairs like winded cream-puffs.

Most of the audience vanished early into the night, closely followed by the play.

Second honors went to something by Joseph Kesselring called *Four Twelves Are 48*, which lasted, like the foregoing, for just two performances. This ghastly little paraphrase of *Kiss and Tell* in bronze make-up dealt with a group of Osage Indians and with what apparently seemed to the author to be the extremely hilarious fact that Indian

girls can be mothers at the tender age of twelve. It is possible that someone might make me howl with mirth at the idea, though I doubt it, but Mr. Kesselring was not the boy to do it. After all, however, it may comfort him to know, I didn't exactly die laughing even when I read a few years ago that a girl in Peru had a baby at the age of five. Maybe something is wrong with my sense of humor. Maybe I'm waiting until a six-months-old baby has a baby. In the meantime, should Mr. Kesselring undertake another comedy, I hope that he will not, as he did on this occasion, esteem as irresistibly comical the periodic ejaculation of the epithet "son-of-a-bitch" and some such scene as one in which a woman who has quarreled with her suitor calls him on the telephone and cajolingly bids him listen to her word of explanation and apology, whereupon a character seated beside her inopportunately blows his nose. Even more, if that is possible, I hope he will learn that merely filling a stage with eccentrics, as in this case, does not automatically produce a valid eccentric comedy. Looniness of character can be made amusing only by sober playwriting skill. The effect otherwise is simply of a sideshow without a circus.

The direction only made matters the worse, since it staged what was farce, if it was anything, much as if it were a serious anthropological discussion.

PAUL CRABTREE'S *A Story for a Sunday Evening* won third honors hands down. This Mr. Crabtree is an ambitious young man. Not only was he the author of the play but its director, the leading actor in it, and one of its producers. As the author, he offered little save a very evident desire to emulate Pirandello despite no vestige of Pirandello's mind, imagination, dramatic competence, or literary ability. As its director, he demonstrated just as little. As its leading actor, he peddled archness for what he apparently believed was ingratiating charm. And as one of its producers he proficiently lost all the money that was put into it.

The play was an attempt, in the improvisatory manner, at the *Six Characters in Search of an Author* sort of thing and had to do with a playwright-actor's rehearsal of his own play treating of his own life in the theatre and involving his love for one actress whom he weds and subsequently for another who almost breaks up his marriage. The characters of the play-within-the-play duly got mixed up with the actors' real selves, and everything, in view of the generally amateurish treatment, worked out handsomely for the storehouse's best interests.

Running neck and neck and finishing nose to nose was Samuel Spewack's *The Golden State*. What you got here was another of those machine-made comedies that hopefully stop over for a visit in New

York on their equally hopeful way to Hollywood. Their gags are in the proper spots and tick off like cut-rate cigar-store window clocks; their characters are more or less the fundamentally obvious ones heavily figged out with eccentricities of one kind or another to give them a superficial coating of novelty; and their plots are paraphrases of the sort of plots that figured in the Broadway comedies of the era of Wagenhals and Kemper and the Sire brothers. They are glib, workmanlike, studiously calculated and — looked at from any critical viewpoint slightly more elevated than a flax-seed — worthless, except on occasions, of which this was not one, at the box-office, which, it is ever prayed, may pay their fares to California.

The present specimen, in the hope of fascinating doubly the movie gentry, was indeed already laid, as its title hinted, in that ingenuous state. The only thing lacking, forsooth, to guarantee a sale instantan was a picture of Sam Goldwyn on the wall of the Los Angeles landlady's bungalow or, maybe surer still, an oil painting, handsomely framed and signed by the artist in block letters, of Darryl Zanuck in full polo regalia, with his arm affectionately around the neck of his thirty-thousand-dollar pony, swelly christened Duke Edward Windsor Rex.

The plot, in the event future movie-goers are interested, con-

cerned an addleheaded old female who imagined she was heir to all Beverly Hills on the score that the blood of the old Spanish grandees ran in her veins and who, while bidding her time until the courts established her rights to the windfall, took in the routine assortment of stage boarders, all of them with dreams of wealth to be extracted from the films and other such weeds of the California soil. Through a device which must have ruptured the playwright's brain, gold was believed to have been found in the ground under the old lady's patio and the cast promptly started riding around in the Rolls Royces of its excited imagination. When it was discovered, with a strain that must have ruptured not only Mr. Spewack's brain but his typewriter, that gold after all hadn't been discovered, everybody went sadly back to normal, accompanied by Mr. Spewack's consoling philosophy that, if people will only make the best of what they already have or haven't got, they will be so happy that they can hardly stand it.

The nonsense was performed in the expected manner by a troupe of misguided players headed by Josephine Hull and Ernest Truex. The first three or four times one sees Miss Hull, her portrayal of a bewildered and fluttery old woman is very amusing but, since the portrayal is always exactly the same, the law of diminishing returns, when the

fifth time comes around, operates to her disadvantage and she becomes a little tiresome. It is much the same with Mr. Truex, who, like almost all diminutive comedians, seems condemned to a single acting pattern and so repeats himself play in and play out that one can anticipate his every expression, voice trick, and gesture a full minute or two ahead of him.

FOLLOWING CLOSE at Spewack's heels was Victor Wolfson with an exhibit called *Pride's Crossing*. In other days a play called *Pride's Crossing* or anything like it was sure to be a bucolic comedy about the widow lady and the mortgage, with a triangle love story involving the young minister, the pretty school-teacher and, as the case might be, her pet horse, cow, or pig. In these advanced times it is either a psychopathic ruckus in which half the characters act like faintly diseased and morbid Olsens and Johnsons and the other half like hotel detectives dressed up as doctors of psychiatry; or it is a psychological melodrama in which everybody is suspicious about everybody else and periodically lets go with a loud, shrill, nervous laughter that makes everyone suspicious even about himself. Mr. Wolfson generously combined elements of both in his play, which induced in his audience a longing for the *Pride's Crossings* of yesteryear with their non-psychological casts

including the memorable, unpsychopathic Wilbur, a trick mule.

If you are one for exact details, Mr. Wolfson's *Pride's Crossing* was located not in Vermont, where most of the *Pride's Crossings* of our youth were, but in Massachusetts. The scene, furthermore, was not the front porch of the Widow Albright's cottage or *Pride's Meadows* (which, except for maybe six feet of stage covered with a too green cloth, was painted on the backdrop), but the drawing-room of a house that, had it ever by any wild stretch of the imagination figured in one of the old-time *Pride's Crossings*, could have served as the village's combination Town Hall, post office, library, First Congregationalist Church, constable's office, First National Bank, and residence of the village prostitute. The characters were the aged mistress of the house, who conducted herself as if she were living in sin in Wuthering Heights with Ellery Queen; a grim Polish servant girl who was her solicitous companion and who acted in turn as if she were being shadowed by the police for the embezzlement of a truculent marinated herring which she had secreted in the old lady's bodice; two small boys, one the old lady's grandson, the other the Polish woman's illegitimate offspring by the old lady's late spouse, a rascal; the old girl's adult son who sniffed around like a houn' dog about to dig up a poisoned beef-bone; and a Henry James young governess

brought into the household just to make things a little more difficult, and thicker.

To get the business off our hands and into the ashcan as quickly as possible, the Polish woman, it turned out, wanted to get the little grandson out of the way by making him over-exercise his weak heart so that the old lady's money would eventually go to her own son, but was foiled — so I was told by people who didn't have enough sense to go home after the first of the two acts — when the visiting governess and the old woman's son spirited the invalid away.

The acting was something. The usually competent Mildred Dunnock thought best to picture the old woman character by reading her lines as if she were toothless, which rendered them completely unintelligible for the greater part of the evening, or at least for that part of it I remained on the premises. Tamara Geva's Polish servant was a compound of baleful glances, expectorated speeches, and irrelevant ballet stances; and John Baragrey's contribution to histrionic art as the father of the ailing child consisted chiefly in embellishing his countenance with a benign grin and pouring out small drinks of whiskey for himself and Miss Bard, who played the governess with some relative, mild intelligence and deserved larger ones.

Concluding the ceremonies and

stepping up to the platform to receive its share of the booty prizes was *Southern Exposure*, by Owen Crump. The impoverished widow lady, preferably a decayed Southern aristocrat, who is driven to take in boarders, is one of the more persistent stencils of our stage and she showed up again, for the third time in the last four years, in Mr. Crump's exhibit. Though the boarders in this case were reduced to one, the standard pattern was kept faithful by introducing various tourists who assisted the widow's exchequer by paying fees to visit the old family mansion. The scene was Natchez, Mississippi, and consequently was not lacking in the omnipresent Negro servant (here named Australia, after the seeming comedy rule that all Dixie colored women were baptized by Lou Holtz) whose every third sentence (pursuant to the seeming comedy rule that all Dixie colored women are Bible fanatics) concluded with the ejaculation

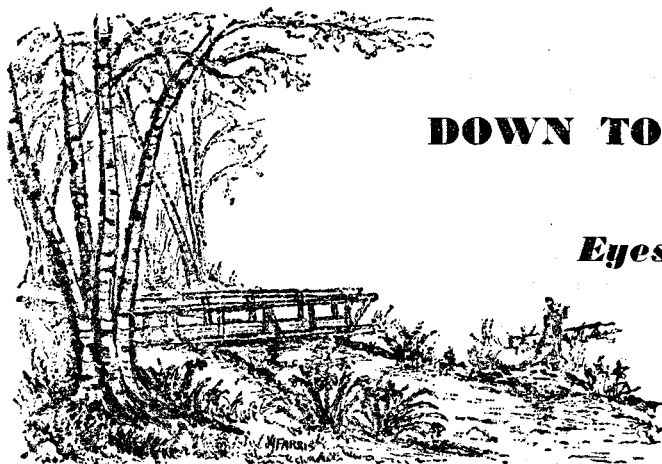
"Hallelujah." The plot involved the boarder, a writer from Vermont, who came to the South in search of scandalous material and got hold of the widow's diary that was rich in racy stuff, but who hesitated personally to profit by it because the old lady was such a sweet and trusting soul and who obtained in her behalf a considerable advance payment on the manuscript from a Northern publisher.

The direction, by Margo Jones, who produced the play originally in her miniature arena theatre in Dallas, Texas, confused the regulation theatre stage with the in-the-round kind, the result being a bastard combination of parlor conversation, affected use of the stage's fourth wall, helter-skelter physical action to inject an appearance of vitality into moribund comedy and dramatic elements, and enough mugging by the performers to suffice a one-ring circus cast solely with clowns and baboons.

ALAN DEVOE

DOWN TO EARTH

Eyes upon Us



AN EARTHWORM is a very humble living thing. It's hardly more than an animated ribbon of pink flesh, with no eyes, no ears, no activities much more complicated than poking its blind way through the soil. But if, one of these June dusks, we find an earthworm coming out of its burrow and flash a light on it, something surprising happens. The worm squirms back into hiding. Eyeless, it has "seen" danger. Its pink skin is covered with photosensitive cells.

It's an astonishing faculty, and pleasant for us to know something about, with summer coming. From the photosensitive skin of an earthworm to the faceted eye of a dragonfly, there are endless visual adaptations. We may beguile ourselves considering some of them.

A common scallop has a row of gleaming eyes along the edge of its mantle. A starfish has eyes at the ends of each of its five "fingertips." Look at a crawfish in daytime: it has pale-colored eyes. Catch the same crawfish at night and it is a dark-eyed animal. The explanation behind this oddity? A crawfish's eye-pigment migrates. By night the pigment arranges itself to give the crawfish night vision. When light returns it recedes and regroups for seeing in sunshine.

If migrating pigment is strange, a whole migrating eye must seem unthinkable. But there is such an eye in a common fish of ours: a flounder. When a flounder is born it has one eye on each side of its head. But, as it grows, its body takes on a more and more flattened shape,

and one of its eyes starts to travel up the side of its head. Up and up the eye moves, until it passes over the top of the flounder's head, descends its cheek on the other side, and comes to rest beside the other eye. Thereafter a flounder lives with both eyes on one side of its head.

When you and I use our eyes, we must move them in unison. Many of our fellow-animals on this green earth move theirs independently. Even an animal as high in the scale of life as a chameleon can keep one eye watchful for occurrences to the south while its other scans the horizon northward. Land crabs move their eyes in this independent way, and achieve further flexibility of vision because their eyes are mounted on stalks. Prowling through its life-adventure, aiming its periscopes in all directions, a crab is likely to get a certain amount of dirt in its eyes. It has a way to take care of that. The crab pulls in its eyes and lowers them into hair-fringed sheaths that serve as eye-brushes.

This crab method is only one of many means by which animals protect and take care of their visual equipment. The eyes of a frog are so bulging that the frog might strike and injure them when it swims through murky water. So, when a bullfrog plunges, it closes its eyes and pulls in its eyeballs until they rest in sockets in the roof of its mouth. When a crocodile submerges, it brings into play a third eyelid,

transparent as glass, slid out from the inner corner of the eye until it covers the eyeball. A movable third eyelid accomplishes wonders for birds. While a bird is flying, its third eyelid passes back and forth across its eye in a sideways winking, keeping the eye moist and clearing it of dust.

OSTRICHES AND giraffes have heavy, screen-like eyelashes to protect their eyes against the glare of the African sun. Eagles and hawks have massive ridges of bone over their eyes, beetling "eyebrows" that shut out the blazing sky-shine from above them. If we do much investigating of burrowing animals, we find a good many have special brushes on their forepaws for cleaning their eyes. And then there's eye care of the kind the little lizard called a gecko gives its eyes. There are several fantastic things about a gecko, including its having sucking-disks on its toes, wherewith to walk upside down on ceilings, hunting flies, and its having no obstruction between its ears, so that if you hold a gecko up to the light you can look through its head. A gecko's eyes have elliptical pupils, like a cat's, to help it in night hunting; and the gecko keeps its eyes shining by washing them with its long sticky tongue.

Animals' eyes deserve all the care they get, for they are instruments serving countless vital purposes. Ani-

mals depend on seeing for more reasons than we're apt to realize. Fish maintain their position in streams, and are moved to swim against the current, not always by the feel of the water but largely by seeing whether the stream-bank is moving. Psychologists have put fish in still water between artificial banks that are made to move, and it so disorients the fish that they swim furiously against the "current" and bang into stationary objects. Naturalists used to think a newly hatched turtle on a sand dune made its way toward the sea because it could smell it. Recently it's been found that a baby turtle *sees* the sea. That is, it orients itself toward "an open expanse of horizon," which, if you're born on a sand dune, generally means the sea.

"Seeing" means more to animals than just seeing particular things clearly. It means seeing relationships; it means discriminative seeing. Naturalists have tested the subtlety of this discriminative ability. If chicks are trained to take food from the lighter of two gray backgrounds, they show such perception of relative lightness that they still go to the lighter background even if the adjacent dark background is floodlighted in such a way that it appears, to our human vision, to be much the lighter. Discrimination of spatial relationships can be exquisite. When the two hands of a clock slowly move apart

or together, their relationship has to change by a minute or more before most of us can see the change. A pigeon detects it at twenty-nine seconds.

We hear, of course, that bulls are especially maddened by the color red. It isn't true. All mammals, except our immediate biological brothers, the monkeys and apes, are color-blind. Animals' eyes aren't made for *human* seeing — in nature, after all, red would have no particular meaning for animals — but for the special kinds of seeing that the circumstances of animal life require; there are innumerable specialties of adaptation.

Do we go fishing? Have we found it difficult to elude the scrutiny of a trout? It's no wonder. A trout has panoramic vision of 160 degrees. Or has it seemed to us, as we sneak up on a fly, that the insect must be able to see behind it? It can. Such insects have compound eyes; their eye is a cluster of packed visual rods or columns, each of which gives the insect an image of one section of its world. An insect may have ten thousand or twenty-five thousand of these "little eyes" compounded into its one big eye; and they are arranged in such a bulging convexity that their owner sees not only to the sides but straight ahead and backward. The multi-facets of a compound eye give insects by no means their only prodigy of special vision. You and I see only colors

within a particular range, the spectrum. Insects have a world of color experience outside that, in a way we cannot imagine. A bee can see ultra-violet. Ants can see infra-red, owls can too.

IN NEW ZEALAND there is a "living fossil" called a tuatara. It's a big iguana-like reptile, and it fascinates a naturalist because it is the sole survivor of a very ancient form of life. In the middle of a tuatara's skull, under its skin, there shows the vestige of what was once upon a time a Cyclops eye. Since the far dim days of that ancestral eye, there have developed eyes in countless kinds and specialties. We don't have to go far to find eye-curiosities. The curiosities are all about.

You and I have in our eyes, as central area of our retina, what's called a fovea. This tiny pit is lined with cells, each with a nerve-connection to our brain. The fovea's the part of our eye where sharpest vision is concentrated. When we focus it on an object we get an image of vivid clarity. But suppose, now, that we dive under water. Our vision becomes wildly distorted and wavery.

So how, when a kingfisher sights a fish in a brook-pool and plunges after it, can the bird see under water to complete the capture of its darting prey? The answer we find is curious. A kingfisher has an oval-shaped eye-lens in which, in-

stead of one fovea, there are two. Using the central foveas, more or less like our own, a kingfisher looks at the landscape with air-vision eyes. As the kingfisher hits the water, in its plummeting swoop after a fish, it stops using these foveas and calls into play the two forward foveas. They provide underwater vision.

Or consider: There is a point in our retina, where the optic nerve passes through the inner coat of the eyeball, that's not sensitive to light. We call it our "blind spot." This blind spot doesn't bother us because we look at the world with two eyes at once. What the "blind spot" in one eye misses, the other eye sees. But many animals can't use their two eyes this way. Each eye is too far around on its own side of the head. The animal's blind spot is experienced as a true spot of blindness; there's a chunk missing from the animal's visual picture. So how about the hazard thereby created for a squirrel, calculating its nice leaps from one twig to another? Nature has taken care of squirrels. A squirrel's optic nerve, where it leaves the retina, is flattened into a thin, thin strip. And so? The blind area in a squirrel's visual picture is by this reduced to a short fine line.

When we go outdoors, these June days, there is a pleasure in using our eyes to watch the lives around us. It can make for an increase in that pleasure to know something about the wild eyes that watch *us*.

Draughts of Old Bourbon

Pregnancy and Politics in Alabama

WILLIAM BRADFORD HUIE

WHEN an overgrown bumpkin who “loves the common people” gets his girl pregnant while he’s running for governor — that’s what we call in Hollywood a “good situation.” Character can be quickly evidenced; there is anguish and conflict and cursing of circumstance; and the drama can be ironic and ludicrous, tragic and human.

This situation became real in Alabama in 1945. The overgrown bumpkin was James Elisha Folsom, alias Big Jim, also Kissin’ Jim; the bucolic Amaryllis was named Christine Johnston; the baby is now as fine a five-year-old boy as any politician ever sired; and I got involved in the plot in 1948 when, for the drama of it, I tried to help Christine force the Governor to publicly acknowledge his son.

The story is not important — except for the little boy who will hear himself called dirty names. Neither Folsom nor Christine is complex enough to be tragic. But,



in some ways, I found their actions more interesting than any of the books based on the Huey Long legend. And, perhaps, now that Common Men who “love the people” are everywhere becoming kings, the story is significant enough to deserve contemplation.

IN A STRANGE WAY I owned a piece of Folsom. He comes from Cullman County; my folks live there; and in 1942 I owned *The Cullman Banner*, a weekly newspaper operated by my brother. I was away, in New York and other alien lands, most of the time; but I was part of whatever happened in Cullman County.

In particular, I was part of the decisions made at the Mule Barn. The most powerful political faction in the county, the Mule Barners, is headed by an earthy, robust gen-

tleman, Mistah D. T. Kenny. Mistah D. T. is a man of many enterprises, but primarily he is a mule trader and his headquarters is at his Mule Barn. All important political decisions in the county are made, not at the courthouse, but in caucus at the Mule Barn. Mistah D. T. and his confederates sit on bales of hay, the bourbon jug is within reach, there is much chuckling and cussing and eye-twinkling, and a roar of healthy guffaws when the final strategy is evolved for foxing our enemies.

My folks and I, we're old Yellow Dog Democrat Mule Barners; we're opposed to all forms of graft we're not in on. Many's the time I've sat on a bale of hay with Mistah D. T. and plotted the discomfiture of some rascal. And in 1942 we Mule Barners had no political problems at all. We had the probate judgeship, the circuit judgeship, the sheriff's office, the Congressman, our voters needed only a slip of paper signed by Mistah D. T. to get work at any war plant, and our candidate for governor was that stalwart friend of the people, Colonel David Bibb Graves, with whom we had won twice before — and with whom, shall we say, we had shared the satisfactions of public service.

We Mule Barners were members of the state-wide Graves Gang, also slanderously known as the Pie-Eaters, meaning that whenever the

"Little Colonel" was governor we, instead of our grafting rivals, handled such responsibilities as state contracts, jobs, liquor, paroles, etc. The Colonel's slogan was: "Those Who Help Bake the Pie Shall Eat It," and we always helped him bake the pie — and helped him eat it.

Colonel Graves' only serious opponent that year was a Black Belt gentleman, Judge Chauncey Sparks, a First National Bank man, and, of course, Sparks was supported by our rival faction in Cullman County. But we Mule Barners weren't worried. We expected a shoo-in, a bargain year, a victory without having to pay more than ten or twelve thousand dollars worth of poll taxes for our loyal voters.

Then came the Act of God — there is always such an act in the career of a Huey Long or a Jim Folsom — or a Harry Truman. The Lord, it just seems, is on their side. After the deadline for qualifying had passed, Colonel Graves died — and left the Pie-Eaters without a candidate. We didn't have a prayer to beat Sparks; and, while there is Southern wisdom which holds "if yuh can't beat 'em jine 'em," we could espy no satisfactions in "jining" the Sparks rascals. Hell, they'd sell all the paroles and contracts. So we had no choice but to look down in the ruck and find somebody to groom for a winning race four years later. Or with whom we might, at least, have some fun.

It costs only fifty dollars to enter the Democratic primary for governor in Alabama, and usually there are, in addition to the serious candidates, six or eight citizens who enter and "run" just for the fun of it. In Alabama, politics, like killing, is a form of amusement. One of these funsters in 1942 was Big Jim Folsom; and, in their extremity, the Mule Barners looked at him and noted that he not only was a home-town boy but a fine, upstanding young man.

Big Jim was, indeed, upstanding. Wearing a size 16 shoe — on Sundays — and an 18 collar, he stood a good foot taller than most of his fellows. He weighed two-sixty; he had a noble forehead, topped with a shock of black hair. He had stature; he looked like a statesman. With a brocaded vest, a long coat, and a little elegance, he might remind the folks of Cotton Tawm Heflin.

Big Jim was young — only thirty-four. Born in a log cabin; had grubbed in red clay. He was familiar with the south end of a northbound mule. Raised on cawn pone and turnip greens. He was an Elk, could sign his own name. Obviously he'd make a great governor.

His career had equipped him to control vast public enterprise. He had been a New York theatre door-man: this had given him majesty and experience in directing the courses of men. He had been on WPA: this had taught him how to

handle public money, how to appraise the meaning of every leaf-fall. He had been in the merchant marine; therefore, he had a world viewpoint, he knew that there is a tide in the affairs of men. Now he was a burial insurance salesman.

Burial insurance salesmen are the new country club set in Alabama. They make more money and exert more influence than the coal barons. For we Alabamians, black and white, are the best-buried folks on earth. Nothing in our lives is so fancy as our leaving it.

Big Jim was summoned to the Mule Barn and informed of his luck. He was now the candidate, not only of the Barn, but of the statewide Graves Gang. Labor was going to support him; he was the sole new hope of the Common Men against Sparks and the blood-sucking bankers — and Wall Street!

Folsom was speechless — so they handed him one — and detailed a Methodist preacher to teach him how to read it. My paper, in a front-page editorial of which there were one hundred thousand reprints, called Folsom "the tall cedar from the Tennessee Valley who will scourge the money-changers from our temples of state and give substance to the dreams of David Bibb Graves and Franklin Delano Roosevelt."

I didn't write that editorial; bombs were falling where I read it — there was a war going on; but my

brother had mailed it to me for laughs — so I laughed.

That's how Big Jim got his start. But there was no sex in his campaign that year. No kissing: his wife was still living. It was just straight, promising, damn-the-rich, praise-Roosevelt, throw-the-rascals-out campaigning by a big, crude, clumsy, but genial old country boy who was only slightly better educated than Harry Truman.

He ran a phenomenal race. He almost beat Sparks, and since governors can't succeed themselves in Alabama, it was conceded that Folsom had only to keep himself in the newspapers, make no mistakes, and listen to smart operators, and he'd be governor in '46.

SECOND IN COMMAND of the Mule Barn machine was the late Circuit Judge A. A. "Quill" Griffith, a tall, gaunt, dark-haired man with a fine sense of political humor, and a life-long friend of mine and my folks.

In the spring of '43 I was in Alabama and Judge Griffith drove me out to show me Folsom. The "next governor" lived in a small, white house on the edge of Cullman. One of his children was playing in the yard, and Big Jim came out on the porch and sat with us. He was barefooted and shirtless, with long galluses over his great, sweating shoulders. We talked about various methods for keeping him in the

newspapers, then he voiced his principal concern.

"Bill," he said, "I got to git the Suit on. I'm just thirty-five and it's gonna hurt me in '46 'less I've had the Suit on. Take this guy Stassen. He's older'n I am, but you see what he's doin' to git the Suit. But, dadgummit, the Army won't take me. They got a rule against taking anybody more'n six foot six, and I'm six eight in my bar' feet. But if I can git that Suit on, nobody can beat me in '46."

Driving back to town, the Judge said: "Bill, you may not believe it, but there is the next governor of Alabama."

I chuckled. "Surely not, Judge. We've elected some piss-cutters — but surely not that one."

"Yep, that's our boy," the Judge went on. "He's got the Power of the Unknown Tongue. These country people think he's Jesus Christ. But we got to get the Suit on him. We got to get him a card in that Heroes Union. And as soon as we get the Suit on him we got to spend a little money sending out pictures and newspaper mats a-showing the folks how old Big Jim is out there on them ramparts a-carrying-on for Democracy."

Translation: The Suit in Alabama politics is a service uniform; the Heroes Union is the American Legion.

"Now you'll be in Washington in the next day or so," the Judge con-

tinued. "You drop around and see some of our friends and tell 'em to contact the Army and . . ."

Well, passing through Washington, I had a drink with an Alabama statesman who is not without influence at the Pentagon — and we had some laughs — and a few days later the Army of the United States reversed itself, waived its previous objections, and put the Suit on Private Jim Folsom.

He wore the Suit about five months — long enough for that literature to go out a-showing Old Big Jim on them ramparts a-carrying-on for Democracy. In December '43 he was released from the Army — the record says "at his own request."

He campaigned in '46 as an ex-GI and a member of the Heroes Union; he referred in every speech to his brother "who had made the supreme sacrifice in the Philippines;" and in October '46, after his election, he donned a tailored American Legion Suit and led the Alabama delegation to the convention of the "heroes" in San Francisco.

Beginning in 1944 Folsom, however, had the misfortune to lose his best balance wheels. The death of his wife in July of that year gave Big Jim the license to become Kissin' Jim. While she lived he had campaigned as a respectable husband and father, but now he could campaign as a young-super-charged bachelor at a time when potent man-

power was none too plentiful in Alabama.

His wife had been a school teacher: Sarah Carnley, the daughter of a South Alabama judge, a conservative woman. She had borne him two little girls and died after a second or third miscarriage.

Folsom had told everybody that he wanted as many children as possible, and a few weeks after his wife's death he began hi-assing about the state in such a manner that Judge Griffith sent me a worried communique. The Judge said that Big Jim, as the next governor, could now command "talcum powder women," and the judge feared the experience "was gonna run an old country boy crazy."

And while he was stamping about the stall in this manner, Folsom lost his best advisers. Judge Griffith died; his son, Kenneth Griffith, went to the Army; my brother went overseas; Folsom's relations with Mistah D. T. cooled, and he began taking his advice and his money from some flush but inexperienced political adventurers.

But Folsom's decision to employ sex as a political tactic — to deliberately "bulge his muscles a'fore the ladies and then line 'em up and kiss 'em" — this decision was his alone, and it was made after he had read a book called *A Lion Is in the Streets*.

This book is a sexed-up, hoked-up version of the Huey Long legend.

It was written by a Nebraska woman who knows as much about the South as a hog knows about Sunday, (she calls our cotton gins "gin mills") but it sold a million copies.

The old Big Lion in this book is a helluva feller. He purely is. A bull of the canebrakes. He ain't no pulin' man; he's a pow'ful kindlin' man. He c'n kindle a dream in men; he c'n, 'n' women jest natchly lusts fer a man liken him. He goes a-pi-rootin' 'round the state, a-promisin' pie in the sky, 'n' mens jumps 'n' hollers 'n' womens hollers 'n' follers. Women jest plumb git dat lolly gag look when the old Big Lion a-bulges his muscles at 'em.

Folsom must have read this book a dozen times. He marked numerous passages, and he gave his marked copy to Christine Johnston while she was pregnant and hiding out during the final months of his campaign. Nothing tells you so much about a man as to read his book and note the lines he has underscored. Folsom's heaviest underscoring was under the Big Lion's motto: "You c'n kiss their ass today, because you're a-gonna kick it tomorrow."

Big Jim actually believed he had discovered Huey Long's formula in this book, and he adopted it as his own. He'd kindle dreams in simple men — promise them a new deal of divided wealth — and with his kissing and his muscle-bulging he'd cause "every woman to take on color when the Big Lion approached."

"A boy 'n' a girl in Springtime," Big Jim'd shout in his speeches, "that's Nature . . . 'n' Old Big Jim shore likes to git close to Nature."

The old Big Lion, too, was allus a-sucking up his guts 'n' a-kissin' afore lovin' 'n' a-gittin' close to Nature. He had women ahonin' fer him behind ever' magnolia bush.

During his climactic campaign in the Spring of '46 Big Jim borrowed all the Big Lion's tactics.

The Big Lion was a-gonna clean up the Capitol 'n' let a green breeze blow through it. So was Big Jim. His principal prop was a "Suds Bucket" and a cawn-shuck mop. He'd grab that mop and sashay around the platform, a-showin' the folks how he'd clean up the Capitol 'n' let that "green breeze blow through it jest's sweet 'n' clean."

In the middle of the act he'd pass the "Suds Bucket" and cajole the crowd to fill it with money. "You folks furnish the suds," he'd roar, "and Old Big Jim'll do the mop-ping!"

The old Big Lion used hillbilly bands and hosanna singers in his medicine show. So did Big Jim. He called his string band "The Strawberry Pickers" after Cullman County's big money crop; and the Pickers would open up every show with *Somebody Stole My Old Coon Dog* and *Way Up Yonder in the Governor's Chair*. At the end of the

speech the Pickers would strike up the Folsom theme song, *Pucker Up, Gals, Here Comes Kissin' Jim*, and old Big Jim would swing down the lines a-kissin' "every baby over sixteen." And the kisses weren't any gentle passes at the cheek. The old Big Lion didn't like "habit pecks"; he liked a sqwushing buss on the mouth. Big Jim boasted that he kissed fifty thousand women during the campaign and "got the vote of every last one of them."

JUST HOW MANY women Big Jim impregnated during this campaign, there's no way of telling. He did his best — and in the South on them Spring evenin's, with God's own moon a-shinin' 'n' ever' livin' thing a-tryin' to bud, I tell you, boys, a man can surprise himself. But one of the impregnated ones, certainly, was the red-headed girl named Christine Johnston.

Christine is a tall, lithe, long-legged, red-headed girl whose folks are Cullman County farmers. Here is her story as she told it to me in 1948.

Christine Johnston Tells Her Story

I began going with Jim Folsom around Christmas, 1944. I was twenty-five; he was thirty-six. I was cashier at the Tutwiler Hotel in Birmingham; his principal business was running for governor. I was a poor girl, and I had worked hard to

get what education I had; he was a poor boy who lived on handouts from his political backers.

I found him attractive. He was lonely; his wife had been dead only a few weeks. He was handsome and devoted and tender. He liked to sing and dance as I did. Above all, he was ambitious, and I came to share his hopes and his ambitions. We dreamed together of how he'd be the governor and I'd be the First Lady of Alabama. Our dreams even extended to Washington.

Our first intimacy was at the Bankhead Hotel in Birmingham in March, 1945, and for the next six months we practically lived together. We slept together at the various hotels where he lived. We didn't worry over the possibility of my getting pregnant because he wanted as many children as he could have and we were only postponing our wedding until a politically-proper interval had elapsed after his wife's death.

I learned I was pregnant in September, '45, after his active campaign for the governorship had begun. As he and I drove away from the doctor's office, I suggested an abortion; but he wouldn't agree to it. He thought abortions were wrong; he wanted a son because he and his first wife had had only two little girls; he insisted that he wanted me to have the child and he wanted to marry me.

But we had to face some natural

and political arithmetic. I was ten weeks pregnant. If he married me our baby would be born in six and a half months and *only three weeks before election day!* This, we both agreed, might defeat him in Alabama, because people "mark the calendar" and remember how long you've been married. Any secret marriage, too, would be politically dangerous.

Then, too, Jim and his backers had planned to exploit his two little "orphan girls" during the campaign. They were planning, for political effect, to seat the little girls on the platform whenever their daddy was exhortin' the Common Men to follow him to the Promised Land. And this they did. Had we been formally married this bit of political drama could not have been employed.

For three nights we rode up and down the highway trying to figure what to do. Jim finally suggested that we pretend to our people that we were married, but that we postpone a recorded marriage until after the election. And because I loved him and was ambitious for us, I consented to this.

This meant, of course, that I had to run and hide; that I had to prevent the Opposition from finding me and publicizing my condition. This wouldn't be easy since many politicians knew me at the hotel, and my sudden disappearance would make them suspicious.

There, too, was the problem of money. I had to support a child from my previous high school marriage which had failed, and Jim had only such money as was doled out to him. More than once I had had to buy our dinners and lend him money to eat on. So, if possible in my running-and-hiding, I had also to keep working.

My good standing with the Dinkler Hotels proved helpful. I transferred from the Tutwiler in Birmingham to the St. Charles in New Orleans, and I was working there in the auditor's office when I received a call from Jim urging me to slip at once back into Birmingham and see him at the Thomas Jefferson Hotel. When I reached the Thomas Jefferson he said that he had become worried lest I submit to an abortion in New Orleans; he exacted a fresh promise from me that I would not have an abortion; and he insisted that I go to Louisville. I went to Louisville and was working at the Kentucky Hotel in November, '45, when Folsom came up for the Alabama-Kentucky football game and spent a week with me.

I registered him at the Brown Hotel and stayed with him all the time I was not working. Although I was then quite obviously pregnant, we attended the game with a party of friends, and after the game, as Jim was drunk, I sent him to his room before I went to work. While I was on duty in the cashier's cage

that night I was told that he was back in the bar making a fool of himself, so I got some friends to take him and lock him in his room.

As Christmas approached I felt that I had to see my family, particularly my child, so I slipped back into Alabama. I stayed at my mother's house for two weeks, during which time Jim visited me practically every night, telling my mother and father that we were married. Then I went to his house and stayed about a week and helped prepare his Christmas celebration for his two little girls. They were very fond of me.

Around New Year's we spent two nights in my sister's home, telling my sister and her husband that we were married, and sleeping together as man and wife. On one of these nights my sister had a small party and Jim told all the guests that we were married. We also visited my grandmother and told her that we were married.

DURING THIS PERIOD Jim had formally announced his candidacy for the governorship; and he assured me again that, of course, we'd be formally married after the election, but that if the newspapers broke my story beforehand he was a ruined man.

After Christmas Jim took me by car to Corinth, Mississippi, and put me on a train to Fulton, Kentucky. While I was in Fulton he telephoned

me instructions to proceed to Nashville and register at the Maxwell House. He joined me there on Friday night and stayed until Sunday night. In the Sunday papers we saw a room advertised for rent by Mrs. E. A. Otto, 817 Stockell St. He drove me to the address, and while he waited in the car I rented the room from Mrs. Otto, telling her — as he had instructed me — that I was the wife of a soldier.

This was in February, 1946, when I was seven months pregnant and while he was campaigning vigorously. I stayed with Mrs. Otto until about May 25, and she proved a steadfast friend. The baby was born April 17 at Hardy's Clinic, and for the birth certificate I gave his name as James Douglas Johnston, as being fathered by my long-divorced husband.

Jim had impressed upon me how imperative it was that I falsify the birth certificate. Detectives for the opposition were looking for it, and if they found it with Folsom's name on it they could print it and defeat him. As a matter of fact, the detectives did find the birth certificate just four days after it was filed, and sent me word that they'd pay me fifty thousand dollars if I'd change it and sign a complaint against Folsom. I refused to see them.

During my stay at Mrs. Otto's, Jim sent me money from time to time, telephoned me almost every night, and once, about four weeks

before the baby came, he asked me to meet him at Athens, Alabama. I went to Athens and we spent four hours together at a tourist camp between his campaign speeches, after which he drove me to Decatur and put me on a train for Nashville.

The baby was born on April 17, 1946, and on May 7 the first primary was held. Folsom led by a tremendous plurality, but a run-off was necessary.

The day after the first primary Jim called me and asked if I was able to travel. He said that there were rumors in Alabama about the baby having been born in Nashville, and he was worried sick. When I said I couldn't possibly travel since his baby had weighed twelve pounds at birth, he told me to allow no one to enter the house and to notify him at once if any suspicious characters appeared. Then a few days later he called and said he was sending me two-hundred dollars and for me to take the baby and leave at once for Hot Springs, Arkansas, where he had arranged a hide-out.

I would have gone to Hot Springs except that the following day I received even more frightening news. One of my brothers, a Marine, had just come back from Okinawa and was demanding an immediate, formal marriage. Thus far I had kept my father and my other brothers partially pacified, first by assuring them that Jim and I were married, and then, when they expressed

doubts, by begging them to believe — as I did — that Jim was sincere and that whatever formal steps we had not taken would be taken the day after the election. But I was terribly afraid that this brother who had just returned would confront Jim publicly and either shoot him or ruin his chances for election. It was to prevent this that I ran to Alabama as fast as I could go.

I reached Cullman, Alabama, on the Saturday before the final election on Tuesday, June 4. My brother demanded that I confront Jim at once, and he went with me to the home of Bryce Davis, a wealthy lumberman who was Jim's heaviest financial supporter.

"Good Lord, Christine, don't make any trouble now," Mr. Davis begged. "I got too much money tied up in Folsom."

Mr. Davis went with us to the funeral home operated by Bill Drinkard, Jim's campaign manager, another heavy contributor, and the present (1948) head of Alabama's department of finance. All of us, including Mr. Drinkard, went down in the morgue and got Jim on the telephone. He was scared crazy to learn that I was back in the state. He told Mr. Davis and Mr. Drinkard to bring me to Warrior, Alabama, where he would meet us.

We got in a black Cadillac — there were two sawed-off shotguns in the car — drove to Warrior, waited on a side road, and Jim, in a

car with his bodyguard, pulled up behind us. His bodyguard was a GI sergeant named Bill Lyerly. Jim came immediately to the car where I was waiting. He began shaking and broke into tears when he saw me — it was the first time he had seen me since the baby was born.

"My God, sugar," he moaned, "get out of the state or I'm a ruined man!"

He asked me about his son, and began pleading for my brothers to recognize his position and give him just four more days. He said that he had the election won; but that my story, even in the Monday papers, would destroy him.

"Of course you're my wife, sugar," he insisted, "and when this election's over we're gonna get married in the biggest damn church in Alabama. But today ain't no day for a wedding!"

He urged that I get as far out of the state as possible; and, knowing that I had an aunt in Pontiac, Michigan, he begged me to go there and gave me the money to go on.

With this assurance from him I got another truce from my brothers, and I left for Pontiac. I was there when Jim called me with the news that he had won by the largest majority in the history of Alabama. He told me to leave at once by plane for Miami and to register at a certain hotel. When I reached Miami, he called me from Panama City, Florida, where he was celebrating

with his supporters, and told me to go to a hotel in Jacksonville where he would meet me.

He met me in Jacksonville. We spent several days there with the baby. He seemed to love me; he clung to me and cried. He'd sit for long periods just holding the baby in his arms and shaking. But I began to doubt there for the first time that he'd ever have the courage to publicly marry me. I could see a yellow streak spreading down his long, bare back. He was no longer his own man.

"You know, Chris," he wept, "I wish with all my heart that I could take you and Jimmy back to Cullman with me right now. But I can't do it. They tell me that if this story gets out even a Republican may beat me in November!"

THE WINNER of the Democratic Primary is always considered the Governor-elect in Alabama. The November election means nothing. But now Jim was telling me that his "supporters" were demanding that he postpone the wedding — and the publicity — until after the November election; and he was pleading with me to stay out of Alabama until then.

I felt crushed and tired and disillusioned. But I decided to go along with him a little longer.

He was desperately afraid for me to spend any time in Alabama. At his urging I went to the Peabody Hotel in Memphis. He called me

there and sent me to Mobile, where I registered in the Admiral Semmes Hotel, and then was sent, by Folsom's Mobile manager, to the Colonial Inn at Fairhope, Alabama.

All this time I was traveling alone with an infant, laundering diapers in hotel bathrooms, begging bellhops to help me heat formula, and steadily losing my weight, my energy, and my mind.

From Fairhope I went back to Nashville for a few weeks with Mrs. Otto, and while I was there Jim called me and told me to proceed on a specific bus to Tuscumbia, Alabama. A sheriff, who was a Folsom henchman, met the bus and drove me to a private fishing camp about twelve miles from Tuscumbia.

Jim met me there and we spent three days as man and wife. We were visited by two prominent supporters, and we went fishing. Jim kept swearing that he intended to marry me, but now it was "after the inauguration" when he could "make my own laws," but I knew he was lying. He wanted to marry me, all right; he wanted his son; but he didn't have the courage and he never would have.

As I sat in the fishing boat with him, far out in the Tennessee River, I confess I considered drowning both him and myself. I watched him silently, and I'm sure he was considering drowning me, and I doubt that I would have resisted much. Yet outwardly he was still talking

about our marriage; he even stopped on the way back from the camp and introduced me to a prominent man as "the next First Lady of Alabama."

After this meeting I went back to Nashville, and on Sunday, September 22, he called me and asked me to come to Birmingham. I went, and spent two days with him, in what was our last meeting.

He was preparing to lead the Alabama delegation to the American Legion convention in San Francisco. He was going to dance with June Haver and other movie stars; and he was going to meet and inspire rumors of a romance with Governor Warren's daughter. A tailor came in to fit his first Legion uniform on him.

As I watched Jim Folsom try on his Legion uniform, and then saw him strut out of my room and into his to meet the press photographers, I gave up completely on him. I knew he'd never have the courage to take any step which might reveal our story.

I knew what his handlers were telling him: "You've got to abandon that girl, Jim. . . . You're the Governor of Alabama now, and you can go a lot further. . . . We've got big plans for you. . . . But if you try to take a bastard baby into the Governor's Mansion, you're finished. . . . You'll get torn to pieces. . . . Let us settle with her."

While he was gone to the Legion

convention, a new group of detectives began hounding me. The Opposition had lost interest in me; now it was the Governor-elect's powerful handlers who wanted to "get something on me" and force me to "settle." Emissaries began coming to me and talking about a "settlement."

I didn't know what to do or where to turn. I had once been able to earn \$200 a month; but now I was exhausted, sick, near the point of a nervous breakdown, and I had one child nine years old and a baby five months old. How could I earn a living in this condition? And if my baby was to be branded as illegitimate, how would this affect my earning power?

I knew that the cards were stacked against me. I knew that to the Common Men in Alabama I'd be just the slut who was trying to blackmail the "great Governor." Yet I didn't want a dime of money from the handlers; I only wanted a fair deal for the child. The emissaries threatened me. They told me that if I dared to say a word they'd produce a dozen men who'd swear that they had slept with me. I knew that they knew this would be a lie; but I knew that they'd try it.

In my desperation I went to Roderrick Beddow, a Birmingham attorney. I didn't want any "case" to be filed, or any publicity. I only wanted Mr. Beddow to help me protect my name and my child.

At two o'clock on a Sunday afternoon in October I sat down with my brother in one of Mr. Beddow's offices. In another office Mr. Beddow began talking with Jim and two of his lawyers. They talked on and on, and I was scared and tired and sick. I had lost so much weight that I was only skin and bones. Several times I got up and started toward the door to tell them all to go to hell, but I sat back and waited. I didn't feel like I was among friends.

At the end of about two hours Mr. Beddow came in and said: "Christine, you don't want to marry Jim Folsom. They'd tear you to pieces down there in Montgomery. I think you better settle with 'em."

The conference continued. Seven o'clock and darkness came, and I was completely exhausted. I had been sitting in that office, waiting, for five hours. Then Mr. Beddow came out.

"They're going to give you five thousand now, Christine," he said. "And you'll get another five thousand a year from now if you've kept quiet."

I didn't have the energy even to comment. Jim's lawyers had pecked out a "little agreement" on the typewriter. There were only two paragraphs and they said something about how I agreed not to "humiliate or embarrass" the Governor of Alabama. I didn't read it; I just signed my name. I wanted to get out to fresh air before I fainted.

But I didn't get all the five thousand. When Mr. Beddow made out my check he said: "I wish I didn't have to do this, Christine, but I've got to take fifteen hundred." So I got a check for thirty-five hundred dollars.

Putting the Heat on Folsom

That was in October, 1946. Folsom was inaugurated in January, '47. In October '47, Christine received the remaining five thousand of the first pay-off agreement; and the day after Christmas, '47, I met Christine for the first time. I then spent much of each year in Maryland; I had sold my Alabama papers; but I was in Alabama visiting my folks, and I drove out through the mud to Christine's house. She told me the story and showed me the child. He was an immensely attractive youngster, and at twenty months he was already as large as the average child of three. The resemblance to Folsom was startling; no other man but Folsom could possibly have sired him.

Not a word of the story had ever appeared in an Alabama newspaper, and by then Folsom was running for President of the United States. Syndicated columnists like Bob Ruark were trekking to Montgomery and calling Big Jim "the South's most famous governor" and a "sure bet for the United States Senate." Folsom had taken one

whiff of power and gone crazy. As the pore man's friend against the "Gotrocks," he was building a treacherous machine, and his rascals were stealing the doorknobs off the Capitol.

I thought Christine talked rather intelligently. "What worries me is what'll happen to Jimmie when he starts to school," she said. "I can't leave Alabama; my folks are all here; and everybody around here knows that Jimmie is Jim Folsom's son. Look at him! How could we deny it? What I want to do is find some way, if possible, to get Jim to acknowledge his own son so that the child can have a chance. If Jim is such a friend of the pore man, he ought at least be willing to claim his pore little son."

Various persons had told her that her story was worth fabulous amounts, and on this I disillusioned her. She had also considered some sort of legal action trying to establish the child's name, but she didn't know where to get a lawyer who would challenge Folsom. I told her that if she decided to make any further efforts, I'd try to help her.

My own motivations were simple. As a novelist I was struck by the ironies, and as a reporter I decided that I'd enjoy seeing Big Jim face Little Jim in a courtroom. Then, too, in Alabama we have a code for political pregnancies. There is no way to keep politicians from siring sons under those Southern moons

during spring campaigns. But tradition prescribes acceptable conduct for a governor when he is presented with his progeny: *kiss him, claim him, and educate him*. That's the honorable course, son: kiss him, claim him, and educate him, and the voters will never hold a little wenching against a good man.

One of our copy-book legends relates how a governor, while rendering an account of his stewardship, was interrupted by a shout: "Say, Tawm, what'd you do with all them bastud chillun o' yourn?" The Governor roared back: "Ah claimed 'n' educated ever' damn one of 'm, suh! What'd you do with yourn?" And thus the Governor assured his election to the Senate.

What-the-hell, if Southern statesmen are losing the courage to acknowledge their own chillun, then the South may as well be abandoned to the boll weevil and Eleanor Roosevelt.

Two weeks later, back in Maryland, I got word from Christine that she wanted to see me, so I invited her to bring the child to my home in Maryland. That was a mistake, because my own wife is childless and is easily captured by attractive children. After two days of playing with young Jimmie, she became his fierce protagonist, demanding that I "do something" to prevent his being called a bastard when he started to school.

I didn't know what I could do. I

cross-examined Christine at length, and decided that she was telling the truth. But Alabama laws offer little relief to mothers of illegitimate children. Even if a man is convicted of bastardy, the penalty is about fifty dollars a year for four years. Folsom's handlers — or, in effect, the taxpayers — had already paid Christine ten thousand dollars. I knew that if anything at all could be done it would first take a lot of work and a lot of money.

I told the story to Dick Clarke, executive editor of *The New York Daily News*. He listened, but when his lawyers told him I didn't have a chance to make the story privileged, he offered no encouragement.

I RETURNED TO Washington and had a frank conversation with Christine. I told her that there was little likelihood that I could do anything, but that I'd try. I'd first have to seek acceptable evidence to substantiate her story; then I'd have to determine if there was any legal recourse for her and the child; and, finally, she'd have to seek a lawyer who would prosecute the case without selling out. I warned her that she could hope for little or no money, because, even if we won the suit, Folsom's liability would not exceed fifty dollars a month. I explained to her that the actual costs would certainly exceed any money we could get for the story. In short, all she could expect was publicity

and heartache and probable failure; and all she could hope for was the legal establishment of the child's paternity.

She told me that she understood. She acknowledged that neither she nor the child had anything to lose from the publicity since their story was already known; and she promised to stick with me.

She went back to Alabama, and I began an incredible six weeks of work and travel. The record of Folsom's telephone calls to Christine in Nashville, Fulton, Ky., New Orleans, Louisville, and Pontiac, Mich., were comparatively easy to get. She had cashed his personal check at the St. Charles Hotel in New Orleans. He had paid for her room with a check at the Maxwell House in Nashville. The manager at the Kentucky Hotel in Louisville remembered Folsom's visit when Christine was obviously pregnant. Mrs. Otto was a faithful witness for Christine; and in Jacksonville, Fla., the hotel housekeeper readily recalled putting the baby bed in the big man's suite.

A man who wears a size 16 shoe leaves a big footprint.

Once I had the evidence, I had to find a law. I found it in Alabama's common-law marriage statute. A man doesn't have to repeat marriage vows before authority in Alabama to be legally married to a woman. He can become legally married simply by introducing her to respectable people as his wife, or by sleeping

with her in a respectable home, or by cohabiting with her in a hotel.

If a man does any of these things, then the woman is his legal wife; and a child born of such a common-law marriage is the man's *legal* as well as *natural* heir, and is legally entitled to his part of his father's estate.

I convinced myself that a legal marriage could be established between Folsom and Christine; that he was, in fact, her legal husband; and that the child could be established as his legal son, with the legal name of James Douglas Folsom.

Then came the matter of helping Christine to find the proper lawyer. She had to have a lawyer who was not in Folsom's gang and who would stand fast even through the Supreme Court. On freezing nights when I was exhausted, I drove with Christine over North Alabama trying to help her find the proper lawyer. There were several disappointments, and after each one I'd try to persuade myself to go back to Washington and forget it. I had already lost five weeks from my work and stood to lose at least four thousand dollars.

One of the reasons I continued was my growing confidence in Christine. She talked straight to lawyers; she was telling the truth; and the snow and the rain didn't stop her.

Finally, in Birmingham, she found a capable lawyer who agreed to take

the case. He was Kingman Shelburne. Mr. Shelburne went carefully over all the evidence, interrogated the principal witnesses, and agreed to carry the case through the Supreme Court — for a fee of five thousand dollars.

Christine had no hope of getting the money from anybody but me. Her folks are poor; and there were few people in Alabama who would have wanted to challenge Folsom in the spring of 1948. He was so popular that he was running to head the state delegation to the Democratic National Convention as a favorite-son candidate for President.

I came back to Maryland, discussed the situation with my wife, and she insisted that we put up the money. We borrowed a portion of it from my mother, and my wife flew to Birmingham with the money in cash and gave it to Christine who, in turn, paid it over to Mr. Shelburne.

I then had nine thousand dollars and six weeks' work invested in the case of Folsom's son. In an effort to recover a portion of it, I went back to *The Daily News* and found Mr. Clarke considerably more interested. He assigned a detective and a splendid reporter, Frank Holeman, to help me, and he promised to pay me five thousand dollars and half the syndication receipts if I managed to break the story, with exclusive pictures, in *The News*. But he assumed no responsibility.

I went back to Alabama and around 8:00 P.M. on the night of March 1, 1948, the suit was ready for filing. Holeman went to Montgomery to confront the Governor after the suit was filed, the detective went to Cullman to flash news of the filing to New York; and, with Christine and copies of the suit, I boarded an airplane in a downpour.

It was a slow DC-3, and the weather delayed the flight repeatedly. Christine sat next to the window; and, every now and then, I'd watch her face as she peered out through the rain. She had left the child in the country with her parents. About once every hour she'd turn to me and ask: "Bill, do you think everything will be all right?"

In Washington at 6:00 A.M. the flight was canceled. I sent Christine out to my home, and I boarded the train. Even the train ran late, and it was 1:15 P.M. when I reached *The News* office. We expected to get the report of the filing at 5:15 P.M., New York time, so we began writing the story. I didn't use my byline because I was afraid I might handicap the child's suit. I, too, was a controversial figure in Alabama, and I didn't want the suit to become a fight between a politician and a journalist; I wanted it to be a fight between a father and his son.

At 5:15 the detective reported from Cullman that the suit had been filed, and the story began to roll in New York, Chicago and

Washington. By 7:00 P.M. most of the people in Times Square were looking at the picture of Christine and Little Jimmie which filled the entire front page of *The News*.

IRONICALLY, HE WAS en route to Washington the night the story broke. But next day he was a harried man. He tried to tell reporters that it was all an effort on the part of the "big corporations to smut me" — but they ridiculed him. Hastily, he returned to Alabama.

The story, of course, was the biggest news in Alabama since the fall of Fort Sumter. Folsom's gang tried at first to charge "politics" — they said the Man-of-the-People was being persecuted by the Selfish Interests — but publication of Little Jim's picture ended this pretense.

Christine, meanwhile, in Maryland and New York, had only one thought: to get back to Alabama where the drama was. She was a famous woman now: she never seemed to tire of looking at those big pictures of her; and people were asking for her autograph.

It was rumored in Alabama that she had received thirty thousand dollars for "her story"; and, human nature being what it is, she didn't deny the rumors. As a matter of record, she never received a penny and could not have. The other rumor that she had been paid some fantastic amount by the "Selfish Interests" was equally ridiculous.

Folsom's defense was not to deny the allegations of the suit — and I don't believe he ever denied that the child was his *natural* son — but to attack the legality of the suit. His lawyers contended that the suit to establish the existence of a common-law marriage was illegal, that even though Folsom might be the natural father he was not the legal father.

The protracted legal arguments were heard by Circuit Judge J. H. Crow, Jr., in Cullman, and Folsom's lawyers lost. The judge ruled that the suit was legal and set a date for Folsom to come into court.

Folsom's handlers made frantic efforts to "deal" with Mr. Shelburne but got nowhere. But three days before Folsom would have had to come into court and face certain defeat, his handlers attacked at the weakest link in our chain. They got the satchel out and made a pilgrimage to Christine.

Two days before the trial I was in Maryland preparing to go to Alabama to witness the show I had paid for when the telephone rang. It was Mr. Shelburne with the news that Christine had gone behind his back and had again signed a "paper" with Folsom's lawyers asking that the suit be dropped.

Both Mr. Shelburne and I were surprised because Christine had convinced us both that she would settle for nothing less than justice for her child. But the offer, apparently, had

been too high. She had gone broke; and there is nothing worse than being famous and broke. Next day she appeared in court, with new clothes and driving a new blue Buick convertible. Mr. Shelburne opposed her request, and asked the court to appoint a responsible guardian for the child so that the action could continue and the child's status be clarified.

Judge Crow was enraged at what had obviously happened, and up-braided Christine in open court. Mr. Shelburne argued that the child had become a ward of the court, and that the court had no right to dismiss the action without first deciding the legitimacy or illegitimacy of the child. In the end Judge Crow dismissed the action "without prejudice," which means that the court did not rule on the legality of the common-law marriage and that the child, at twenty-one, can re-open the case.

I don't know exactly how much money they gave Christine in the "second pay-off." But the two pay-offs together, plus legal counsel which Folsom charged to the state, must have cost the taxpayers of Alabama considerably more than fifty thousand dollars.

For myself, I received from *The Daily News* and the syndicate approximately eight thousand dollars. I had spent more than nine thousand, so I not only lost all my time and energy, but I lost at least a

thousand dollars in actual money. This is all a matter of record.

My wife, my mother, and I — with Mr. Shelburne — were the only persons involved other than Christine. We were the only persons who spent effort and money — and we did it for a child — and all we accomplished was to place Christine in a position where she could again collect from Folsom's gang. Shortly after the second payoff, she married a farm boy who was considerably younger than she was. I don't know where she is today.

The little boy will be five years old this spring, and the only hopeful thing for him, I suppose, is that he'll be big enough to beat up all the kids who call him a bastard. A doctor who examined him predicts that he'll be bigger than Big Jim by the time he is eighteen.

As for Folsom, he's back in Cullman selling burial insurance — and preparing to run for governor again.

As for myself, I have only one other gesture to make. All the evidence accumulated in the case — ample evidence to prove that Folsom is both the natural and legal father — is in a bank box. This evidence, together with a 12-gauge shotgun in good working order, I bequeath to Little Jim for delivery on the day that he becomes a man. He then may employ either bequest in whatever manner his conscience may dictate.

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In Our Readers' Opinion

I enjoyed your analysis on Who Should NOT read THE MERCURY. In my opinion, a list of Who SHOULD Read THE MERCURY would include:

1. Folks who prefer the flavor of venison to beef — or, those who prefer their beefsteak rare.
2. Assorted WACs and ex-Marines, of course. Maybe a few nurses.
3. Assuredly, all men who frequent smokers.

As for me, I may be somewhere between an eligible for the Watch and Ward Society and a Proper Mercurian.

EVELYN E. TUDHOPE
BRISTOL, VERMONT

Right off I make a charge. There's too much of William Bradford Huie in THE AMERICAN MERCURY. His flags for attention keep popping up everywhere. Let's say, though, that the man is all he seems to be In MY Opinion, ready to lend an ear in the quest for Truth rather than to declare it established with his unbridled tongue. With that ascertained, I am ready to sink money in supporting him, for here, say I, is something really worth-while, a force to jolt us out of our apathy, a ringing voice for freedom.

JAMES F. LOUGHRAN
BUFFALO, NEW YORK

Others must feel the same way I do about the MERCURY, as our neighborhood paper recently carried an ad in which their provincial stronghold had the courage to publicly state that he would pay \$1.00 for the March issue. Needed the dollar but valued my copy too much to dicker.

GEORGIA L. SWINGER
NEW YORK, N. Y.

Every other magazine on the market lacks the robust blood and guts style which has endeared me to you. If they ever ban THE AMERICAN MERCURY in Cinti, I'll either move elsewhere to obtain it or see my Congressman.

ERIC W. NOAK
CINCINNATI, OHIO



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